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THE MARVELOUS MISADVENTURES OF THE LEVESQUE SISTERS
VOLUME I

THE HISTORICAL CONUNDRUM
MYSTERY OF THE LETTER

(Fiction)

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Approximately 55,000 words

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VOLUME I: THE HISTORICAL CONUNDRUM; MYSTERY OF THE LETTER

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PREFACE

Our previous summer journals were a faithful record of our marvelous escapades, laughable missteps, sundry musings, and relentless mental acrobatics which we prudently decided to suspend after our epics mysteriously found their way into the hands of Mrs. Melvin Keane, household tyrant and celebrated expert on all things nonexistent. Happily, our hiatus from writing about ourselves could only endure so long despite the omnipresent eye of the Snallygaster. Having braved a perilous journey of five blocks in the company of our valiant champions Frank and Louis, we sallied forth en masse into the stationery shop with change purses unsheathed. Victory! The proprietor bargained away his glorious leather-bound volume of blank paper. Returning home with our prize, each one of us took a solemn oath to protect it from rapacious hordes of pixies. [*Myrna!*]

Alrighty, for the last two years, we attempted to keep journals, but [*our self-appointed governess*] Mrs. Keane has a talent for finding them – certainly, her “little friends” [*the household staff*] are whispering in her ear. She doesn’t approve of us preserving a record of our “unseemly antics.” What would people say? I can’t imagine what she means. Our antics are very ladylike. Despite having our prior work confiscated, we are starting a new collaborative journal; but first, a brief introduction. [*Hello, Imaginary Ladies, I’m Ella.*]

INTRODUCTION

Greetings! Glorious ladies somewhere up the road, we are the Levesque Sisters: Ella Collene and Myrna Eloise, ages, twenty and eighteen respectively; both orphans; the last direct descendants of Captain Jacques Levesque, celebrated mariner, owner of a coastal steam packet, and railroad speculator – legend has it that he did not speak French. His sons were landlubbers: the family business transitioned to railroading exclusively. The current Levesque patriarch is the superintendent of his railroad company since 1883, and the directors occasionally appoint him president *pro tem* when the need arises. He also holds a sizable portion of shares, mostly inherited. Counting those willed to us girls by our parents, the collective position of the Levesque heirs amounts to a controlling interest in the company. Imagine that! After eighty years of judicious investment, strategic marriages, and steadfast participation [*also called “working”*], harsh fate funneled the industry of several generations into the care of an administrator for two eccentric maidens, the presumptive corporate matriarchs. Goodness!

We started off cousins: Henry George Levesque, nephew of Mr. James Levesque, Sr., was my father. He married Collene Gwendolyn Hennessy, sister of Chief Inspector Roscoe Rufus Hennessy. She succumbed to pneumonia when I was five. After my father died from injuries that he received from crashing his motorcar into an old oak tree, Uncle Roscoe brought me to Port Unity to live with him. Seeing that my uncle was not prepared to assume the responsibility of being guardian of a teenaged girl, Mr. Levesque invited me to live in his house and be Myrna's companion. Mrs. Keane, the “general manager” of the household, prematurely rejoiced. She assumed my role was guiding my cousin back to more ladylike diversions. Far from it! Myrna, then eleven, was beginning to become enamored with machines, and taking them apart was

integral to the affection. I saw nothing wrong with it, nor did her grandfather. After she welcomed me into her basement workshop to join in the fun, he had two “handy ladies” tinkering. In time, we became inseparable, so Mr. Levesque decided to adopt me; thus, bringing the last surviving heirs of the Levesque family legacy under the same roof. I refer to Myrna as my sister, disregarding technicalities.

Superintendent James Edward Levesque, Sr. is jovial and relaxed at home, enjoying frequent conversations with his old cronies such as Edmund McNair, Elbert Skinner, and Georges Deschamps – none of them speak or read French. He plays the piano well, and his skill at sightreading is exceptional. Home is a pleasant and sometimes silly place because Mr. Levesque knows when to set aside time for himself. Like Myrna, he juggles different personae: a delightful grandfatherly person at home; at work, he is an exacting taskmaster; and in the world without, a force to reckon with. Perceiving the utility of instilling confidence in his girls, he encourages our tomboy interests despite the tyranny of orthodox assumptions. [Completing the domestic assortment is Mrs. Melvin Keane, a lady of sorts: perpetually irritable, quarrelsome, and sanctimonious. Though convinced that mischievous sprights occasionally infest the neighborhood and treacherous lizard birds are nesting in our basement, Granddaddy James thinks she is exceptionally good at managing the business of the household so we must tolerate her unappealing attributes. Good enough.]

There are several esteemed gentlemen who complicate our lives. Mr. Oscar Milton Buchanan is the administrator of the estates of James Edward Levesque, Jr., and his cousin Henry George Levesque. A longtime confidant of Granddaddy James, he is chief attorney for the railroad, Roscoe Hennessy’s immediate superior, and designated manager of our academic and

practical education. His daughter Elizabeth is Mr. Hennessy's inevitable fiancée though he is unwilling to acknowledge it – ha-ha-ha!

Uncle Roscoe assumed his position at the railroad's corporate headquarters in 1909. Born to an old southern family, educated at the best schools, teaching courses in a military academy at twenty-two, the company commissioned him to write a procedural manual for their railroad detectives and station police in 1906. Company Attorney Oscar Buchanan and Major Richard Durant persuaded the Board of Directors to create an administrative position for him, the Chief Inspector – family connections helped. He is neither an experienced soldier nor lawman, but a superb scholar of both professions. Mr. Buchanan tasked him with overseeing our practical education.

During our summer apprenticeships in the family business, Mr. Hennessy assigns us to different departments at corporate headquarters to receive training in the diverse aspects of railroading. There has never been any doubt in our minds that we want to work for the company (certainly, we were born deeply invested in it), but Mr. Buchanan is concerned that he might lose his precious matriarchs to another department. [*Especially you.*] Therefore, we spend a good portion of our summer doing something for his Legal Department [*like assisting Major Durant*]. Still, the Engineering Department needs me for a few weeks of drafting.

“Major” is Mr. Durant's former military rank; his corporate title is Assistant Chief Inspector. He prefers the former and established a military hierarchy of rank for the station police officers. Having gained experience as a railroad detective while working under his father, the previous Chief Detective, he is the practical counterbalance in the division. The Major is close to Myrna and recognized her genius for practical analytical thinking early, yet she has a host of mentors: Uncle Roscoe says she has a talent for strategy; Chief Engineer and Architect

Edmund D. McNair calls her a born engineer; Locomotive Designer and Master Mechanic Elbert Skinner wants Myrna to apprentice in his design division; and Master of Transportation Georges Deschamps hails her a “cardsharper of the first order.” These men transformed a precocious girl into their unité d’espit. [Right, the gentlemen turned a natural tomboy into their practical experiment, disregarding all conventions regarding the education of women. How revolutionary! No; it’s business. In the words of Granddaddy James, “Never squander a good thing while you have it.” More precisely, the fate of the company cannot fall into the hands of an incompetent Johnny-come-lately, so tidying up before the matriarchs arrive leaves less to chance. The Levesque line is playing out: “We can afford to dispense with tradition.” Ella is a tomboy, too, except in a ladylike way. Liz was the first, but they had to start somewhere.]

THE HISTORICAL CONUNDRUM

Our summer apprenticeships

Mr. McNair is training me as a draftswoman (my “smart boys” in the Engineering Department think I am coming along nicely) but anything pertaining to building or mechanical contraptions is for me besides running, climbing, swimming, tinkering, calculating, and exploring. I also enjoy playacting, sleight-of-hand, and penning silly stories.]

My expertise is risk-taking, along with subterfuge, distraction, and naughtiness. Uncle Roscoe recognized the utility of my dubious talents early, conscripting me into his regiment of railroad detectives. Only last year, I completed my training. My periodic assignments include assisting Liz Buchanan at corporate headquarters and working in the office of station police. In the latter, I maintain records, attend to any woman that the officers arrest, and surveil the station for illicit activity. Sometimes, I am the officers’ volunteer mock miscreant, evading them for hours while moving about in the terminal.

Major Durant told me that Uncle Roscoe is assigning me to his latest “special inquiry.” So, what is it this time? Oh, it’s more unsolved cases from the archives. Three railroad men inexplicably disappeared while repairing sections of track on the great arc leading to the bridge at Unity Bluff. Goodness! When did this happen? The Major told me that one man went missing from a five-man crew in March 1904; the other two, both trackwalkers, vanished from the same area four years later. Busywork? No, after all these years, a witness came forward. Really? Not an eyewitness but close enough: an employee who heard all about it from a now deceased employee who found the men’s graves.

Mystery

Monday, May 25, 1914. Sometimes, absurdity comes to the fore to stimulate some serious investigation. Every year on summer evenings since the turn of the century passengers occasionally report having seen a glowing orb two miles southwest of Haynes Town Station near the trestle over Buzzard Creek. Some of the residents of Northeast Township brave the mosquitoes and yellow flies to venture through the swampland to watch for it. Local lore has it that the light is the ghost of Pete Bresnahan pointing the way to his unmarked grave. Repeatedly, the company sent out engineers to observe the phenomenon and they come to the same conclusion: steel rails transmit an electrical charge over distance, and it excites pockets of the methane gas accumulating in the swamps from decaying vegetation. There are many such “ghost lights” observed on railroads throughout the country, some having inspired storytellers to concoct enthralling fictions. Nevertheless, light, magnetism, and electricity link intimately to matter, so all phantasmic explanations belong to the craft of popular literature. If you leave the door open for restless spirits meddling with the natural order then you cannot turn away leprechauns, witches, snallygasters, and the bogie man. If anybody save Mrs. Keane considered the implications of sharing our existence with a menagerie of unruly castoffs from the Realm of Anything Goes, they will quickly realize that our certainty about the behavior of the natural world falls.

Tommyrot aside, the disappearance of Pete Bresnahan is a mystery which has occupied the imagination of many – often too much – since the mid-1890s. The self-described historian Nester Horne is responsible for attaching the “Ghost Light” to the narrative though he exaggerated many details and manufactured a romantic framework for the tale. Bresnahan, the first populist political boss was a ladies’ man who carried on with numerous women, including those who

were married. One evening, an enraged husband and his friends took the rascal away on the back of a buckboard tied hand and foot. An old man reported seeing the party leave town on the River Road, also called then the Haynes Town Road, now the northern extent of County Highway. Nothing appeared in the Messenger about the incident, but rumors circulated that the men murdered Pete and threw his body in the swamp. Horne weaved the “Ghost Light” in to add spectral spice. The residents of the railroad district have a different myth. When somebody disappears – or perceived as going missing – the malevolent spirit of “Demon Pete” took them. Young ladies get a heaping dose of the myth starting from girlhood. Pete likes the ladies! The fiend is apt to take victims when they venture out alone after dark, “spiriting” them away to an underground lair. His motivation is retribution: the working-class men he represented did not come to his rescue. They didn’t even report his abduction! Even his staunchest followers stood by and let it happen.

Legends pertaining to the demise of Pete Bresnahan are not a matter for the company, but Uncle Roscoe is concerned the unexplained vanishings of several railroad men over the years attributed to Demon Pete is worthy of a cursory inquiry. He specifically used the term “inquiry” since there was insufficient evidence to justify an investigation. The three reported instances occurred prior to 1909, all reported by foremen in the upper yards, and Major Durant filed a report with Sheriff Browning after conducting a thorough search of company property. It is doubtful whether the former sheriff devoted any effort to the cases. The Major and I commenced our inquiry by interviewing Miss Agnes Tedder, a longtime employee of the company who works in the office at Unity Bluff Station. It is a diminutive waystop near the east abutment of the railroad bridge at the confluence of the Northeast and Southwest rivers. The great five-mile arc leading to the beginning of the northern division of the line and the tracks of the Unity

Terminal's upper yards begin in the freight yard of this station. With the exception of the Houghton Metalworks contained within the arc, the land was the former site of Paradise Plantation, a property once owned by the reclusive Dr. Andre Hecke. The company purchased the entire tract in 1841. Miss Tedder, who spent her entire forty-three years living in her parents' cottage on the bluff recalled hearing several stories about the plantation from her grandfather. Dr. Hecke, an emigrant from Nassau, purchased the land in 1811 from Claudius Murray, the absentee owner. The physician cultivated medicinal plants from which he derived extracts. His only known friend in Port Unity was Dr. Michael Andrews, a founding member of the state medical society and first editor of their journal. At age seventy, Dr. Hecke sold his holdings to the company and removed to Charleston. While this morsal of history is fascinating we were anxious to hear about Demon Pete.

Miss Tedder told us that her late father came across unmarked graves while hunting on the northern perimeter of the plantation, abandoned to nature for sixty years. She was willing to lead us to the site. After asking Sheriff Smallwood and Coroner Cordell to join us, we trekked through the scrub and brambles from the outer edge of the arc until we reached the ruins of the plantation house. The coroner found six sunken patches of earth in a row – indicative of graves. In close proximity were fragments of tombstones. It turned out to be the Murray family burying ground, one hundred and fifty years older than what we were expecting. Dr. Cordell is preparing the paperwork to have the remains removed to County Cemeteries after he makes his examination. Though our inquiry failed to reveal anything concerning the railroad men who went missing, Uncle Roscoe told Mr. McNair about our find. He intends to send Myrna, Frank, and Louis out to the ruins of the Murray-Hecke House to make drawings and take photographs.

It dates from the same period as the long-gone Haynes House which served as the terminal's first station.

Early Port Unity Depot

Ladies, remember what I was working on last summer? No? [*How could they? Mrs. Keane took our journals.*] Mr. McNair had me researching piles of drawings and documents from the archives in an attempt to discover what the company built at Unity Terminal before the chief engineer's records went up in flames. I'm still at it! Where should I begin afresh? Let's start with something substantial: land.

Today, I learned that there are deposits of limestone within the terminal and some of our oldest brick walls have mortar made from it. One large chunk of the stone found in the inclined plane contains fragments of shells. At some point in the distant past, the land was under the ocean. Somebody anxious to study engineering should know about the nature of the soil where they anticipate building. Mr. McNair gave me a bulletin from the state geologist to read about the different clays used in brickmaking. The river deposited the clay used in locally made brick. It began as stone far inland, gradually eroded by weathering and stream flow until the clay particles settled out when the water could no longer carry them. The early builders in the region used local clay to make brick and the limestone to make mortar. They also used ballast stones dumped from the ships. Good enough! In the afternoon, Frank and Louis took me for a drive. First off, we went to the Office of the Register of Deeds in the basement of the courthouse. The entrance is below the front steps. I wanted to take a peek at the magnificent hall on the first floor, but the boys said we didn't have time. They had plenty of adventures in store – hurrah! Hastily, they showed me how to use the indices to find a deed, by grantor or by grantee. We found the original deed for

the Haynes land the railroad purchased in 1834. It mentioned the stream cutting through the bluff and limestone outcrops in the gully. The deed referenced a survey made by Major Romulus Simmel. We found it, too!

In 1818, Joshua Haynes hired Simmel to resurvey his three-hundred-acre unproductive plantation into town blocks, 330 feet by 330 feet separated by a grid of roads sixty-six feet wide, mostly divided into five lots. The plan attenuated some blocks to accommodate existing county roads. Mr. Haynes intended to sell off these parcels individually over time; and by the end of the last century, his heirs bargained away the last of them. The railroad purchased six blocks between the bluff overlooking the river and the ancient bridge on the county road, including the old family house on the bluff and its outbuildings; and a ninety-nine-foot right-of-way extending northeasterly through the entire Haynes property centered upon the gulley. The chief engineer at the time favored this location because there was a natural decline of twenty degrees over three thousand feet to the bluff; and by excavating the stream bed and putting down track, the company might have an inclined plane to bring a train to the river's edge. The latter happen in 1843; but in 1834, the depot existed on paper. We took a ride to Northeast Township on the bumpy dirt road called County Highway. When it's finished, the commissioners might dream up a better name for it. Our destination was the site of the long-abandoned other Haynes Plantation in search of evidence of early buildings. No luck. It was a patch of dense scrub and pines. A maze of meandering sandy roads cut through it to a landing. It was getting late, so we decided to return to corporate headquarters.

The neglected Paradise tract

Wednesday, May 27, 1914. That the company hasn't made a detailed survey of the land beyond the arc since 1870 perturbed Major Durant. Once cleared of its old trees to supply fuel to the steamboats and locomotives, the company left it to become dense forestland in the decades after the introduction of coal burners. Mr. Levesque considers the entire tract an asset which might prove advantageous in the future but presently the company has use only for the small portion which abuts the upper yards. The Northside neighborhoods and Houghton Metalworks – all created from portions of the Haynes Plantation, constrain the terminal's expansion northward; while at the same time, the company's ownership of the Paradise tract and the arc is a barrier to further expansion of the Northside.

Mr. McNair was surprised that anything remained of the Murray-Hecke House. Though engulfed by a stand of young pines, the roofless post and beam framework of the structure remained along with the brick chimneys. The tall ballast stone foundation was sound. Myrna and the McNair boys prepared a set of architectural drawings of the ruins.

Pieces of a jigsaw puzzle

Friday, May 29, 1914. While searching the archives, I found an undated photograph of the old company workshops taken sometimes before 1880. The mechanics posed with their tools outside the three large arched openings of the building through which tracks ran for bringing in the locomotives. Neither Mr. McNair nor Granddaddy James recognized the men, so it is likely that the picture dated from earlier. There were large circular openings above the doors for ventilation and crowning this tall structure was a lantern roof to let in light and help with air circulation. Missing were the additions on each side for other workshops. A lithograph of the

riverfront dated 1854 shows the rear view of old Unity Station. The building atop the bluff is a match for the workshops. Furthermore, an 1870 map of the Port Unity City Plan includes the depot buildings along with every structure in town in its respective lot. No mystery here...

except, it is impossible to tell whether the shop was one of the original structures. The *Messenger* articles after the 1843 conflagration noted “all that the damaged locomotive shop needed was rebuilding its wooden roof.” The walls remained solid. Mr. McNair told me to check several volumes of the annual proceedings of the stockholders for the years immediately after the fire. The report on work done by the chief engineer should mention repairs and construction undertaken. I needed something more substantial than newspaper articles.

I learned from the stockholders’ proceedings that company carpenters rebuilt the roof of the locomotive shop, and the two Stephenson engines inside reported destroyed by the *Messenger* were back in service. Two brick buildings withstood the fire: the locomotive shop and a house for the stationary engine used for hauling carts of produce up the rise. What rise? Oops! I needed to go back a few years to 1835. Yes, the station was then on the bluff overlooking the river – its twenty-six feet above the water. The company built a section of trestle on the slope to haul produce up to the cars from the warehouse on the steamboat wharf... Well, I know about the steamboats. Jacques Levesque, my celebrated forefather, owned them – he didn’t speak French. The railroad owned the wharf and warehouse. Back to 1843: the company excavated an inclined plane of 2,356 feet through the dry stream bed cutting through the bluff, thus allowing workers to put down tracks leading to the wharf. This was the new location of the passenger station and warehouses. That is where they remained until 1870 but the buildings changed – I am getting

ahead of myself. In 1875, the company lengthened the inclined plane by a thousand feet and improved the grade.

With the exception of the locomotive shop and stationary engine house, the remaining original depot buildings were wooden. This included an old house and several outbuildings which were on the property when the company purchased the land. Mr. McNair thought having Granddaddy James invite Professor Willis over for dinner might provide me with the opportunity to learn more about the Haynes landholdings. As for the old house, a few eighteenth-century dwellings remain in Port Unity, and scattered throughout the county were a few more. Their floor plans are not complicated; but lacking a contemporary description of the specific structure, studying surviving examples of local domestic architecture was merely narrowing the field of possibilities.

Lost knowledge

Sunday, May 31, 1914. We enjoyed having Dr. and Mrs. Willis over for dinner along with Mr. McNair, Frank, and Louis. After cake and coffee, we discussed the terminal property. Before the railroad, Old River Road (Fourth Street) was the principal thoroughfare between Port Unity and Laine County. It bisected the Haynes and Murray plantations. There was a small wooden bridge over the gully. Nearby was the Haynes family tomb, rumored to be demolished after the railroad assumed possession of the property. The family removed the remains inside to the Episcopal Church burial ground on North First Avenue, all the graves moved to County Cemetery after the 1883 fire – maybe? Even though the church records document the move, the Haynes family was not on the cemetery's list of remains reinterred. Who knows?

The house, according to several travelers' accounts, was situated on the bluff with the rear "piazza" (porch) facing the river. Built sometime in the 1740s, it was a modest timber structure whitewashed with lime. By the time the railroad acquired it, the house was in poor condition, the owner having vacated it in the 1820s. Even so, the company used it for a station and offices until 1843. That was it! The professor explained that few people bother to write about their familiar environs; and when they do, it's usually not in minutiae an architect or surveyor could appreciate. "Some details might appear in deeds, insurance policies, tax assessments, and other official documents. In the age before building permits, rarely were architectural plans preserved – if in fact, there were any. Port Unity in all its detail recedes from living memory every few generations. What remains are several examples of structures from each period. Somebody builds a home, it's lived in, then torn down without any evidence of its existence other than the official record." He remarked that knowledge about the commonplace gradually becomes forever inaccessible. Hmm, this undertaking bristles with snags.

I am not doing much better with my assignment. There comes a point where investigation becomes historical research. The best that I can do is detach the legends from the fragments of verifiable facts from the past.

Pete Bresnahan

Tuesday, June 2, 1914. Now, Uncle Roscoe wants to know more about Pete Bresnahan, so he tasked me with the research. I discovered several fascinating stories on my pathway to nowhere.

The descendants of the first families in Port Unity (the muckety-mucks) speak of notable citizens in the early town with reverence even though their contributions were not extraordinary.

Amongst the forgettable personalities is Victor Benoit, a successful merchant who was a town alderman, served on a church vestry, and lent his support to various local improvement projects. In many respects, he differs little from the generations of successful minor businessmen who followed him. His claim to local notoriety is the house he left behind. In 1820, the elderly Mr. Benoit purchased an entire town block in Joshua Haynes' fatuous continuation of Port Unity. He selected a level well-drained spot on a hill near the county road (now Fourth Street) with the front of the lot facing a vast grassy field of gently decreasing elevation. He hired a respected builder to construct his grand Federal Style dwelling, passing away in 1829 without realizing his error. Romulus Simmel's plan projected a grid of streets upon the undulating topography of Haynes Plantation, with all those running west-to-east new to the town plan. A proposed street named "Overview" encroached upon railroad property and never became part of the public way. Briefly, his new house was visible from Boundary Street (now Mulberry). The terminal soon eclipsed it. When the county continued the south-to-north streets of Port Unity in the Northside, the grand entrance of the Benoit House faced the high plank fence of the passenger yard and the rear fronted Haynes Street between Third and Fourth. A later owner of the house named Horace McElhenny had an elaborate Italianate addition added to the Haynes Street side to create a new entrance – fascinating history, but the Bresnahan association with the house comes decades later.

In 1877, the Benoit-McElhenny House became the headquarters of the Popular Coalition, a political club whose mission was to garner votes for a slate of candidates of varying party affiliations supporting policies favorable to the interests of small farmers and the working class. While similar organizations existed throughout the country during this period, the primary objective of the local "populists" was dislodging the ineffective career politicians. In their

endeavors the coalition garnered some support from The Family, descendants of the original land barons of the region. Additionally, the Houghton Metalworks and many Port Unity merchants provided financial backing for the organization. By 1879, a gifted orator named Pete Bresnahan relentlessly stumped for the candidates in every venue imaginable throughout the county, always accompanied by his rabbleroxing colleague Joe Griggs. There is no consensus amongst regional chroniclers as to the origin of the duo, but they agree that Bresnahan was the most eloquent. Despite the prevailing legends, Mr. Bresnahan was popular but not a ladies' man. The rise of the Bresnahan-Griggs machine began after the Great Fire destroyed the North Docks along with a great portion of the terminal. During the decade which followed, the Popular Coalition bankrolled numerous candidates, gradually replacing the ossified Board of County Commissioners by the late 1880s. Bresnahan's disappearance occurred a few years before the Panic of 1893 and the ensuing economic downturn. Crop prices fell, hurting farmers throughout the country. The situation proved to be a boon for the populists. It was during this time Boss Joe Griggs packed county government with his favorites. The worst of the lot was the corrupt Sheriff Dick Browning. During the Election of 1912, The Family in conjunction with dissatisfied prominent citizens throughout the county offered a slate of reform candidates as opposition to the Griggs machine, foremost among them attorney and former state senator Herbert W. Smallwood. Mr. Levesque threw his support behind the reformers. The Popular Coalition sustained heavy losses but still maintained a foothold in county government due to continued support in rural communities. The owners of shanties in the railroad district enjoy protection from the enforcers of modern standards because the county blocks all annexation efforts by the City of Port Unity – the opposite of Joshua Haynes' intention. The Benoit-McElhenny House is still the headquarters of the Popular Coalition, and Orrin Blackwell is its chairman. Boss Joe

Griggs is still the president of the organization and the “kingmaker,” but he rarely appears in public, whiling away his later years in his “villa” on the sound.

The Messenger made no mention of Pete Bresnahan’s disappearance nor was there a report filed with then-sheriff Sam Dupree. Official documents supporting any of the tales concerning his nocturnal abduction by the friends of a vengeful husband do not exist. Even the name of the old man who claimed to have witnessed the crime is unnamed in Nester Horne’s spurious narratives. For want of any evidence to the contrary, one can easily put forth the argument that Bresnahan skipped off.

Uncle Roscoe considered my work a valuable exercise. Yes, it was merely instructive! Pure fabrication endures in a state where official documentation is lacking, therefore, supporting or refuting prevailing beliefs is impossible... except, where rigid facts and physical laws contravene the claims. Myrna is struggling with her own variant of the historical conundrum: attempting to render representations of unremarkable things from the past environs of the terminal using fragmentary evidence. While Mr. McNair might benefit from unearthing the footings of a long-gone passenger station, even finding demolition debris validating her speculation, one can only learn so much from a shoeprint. Undocumented knowledge spoils! In most instances, the lost past doesn’t trouble anybody until there is a present need to know it.

Good enough. It is awfully sensible to know the difference between what we don’t know and what we can’t know and why knowing this or that is worth knowing, because some things Mrs. Keane knows are best forgotten, and there might be some interesting facts strewn along the path that leads to nowhere – I know more about old houses in general because the particulars of the Haynes house are unknowable, so, general knowledge is useful for determining what the unknowable is not. [*That is Myrna’s convoluted explanation of something obvious.*] Ladies, do

you like surprises? Uh-huh, Mr. McNair likes the nice ones, too! He is of a different mind when it comes to unanticipated discoveries on his construction sites. The history of building in the terminal is interesting to him insomuch as it helps the company avoid unnecessary delays in putting up *his* buildings. That's it! I find the same interesting because all the inconsequential and unprovable possibilities apply to something somewhere, sometimes. [*Myrna certainly considers all possibilities.*]

A forgotten station

Wednesday, June 3, 1914. My next task was to come up with a floor plan for a long-gone station using a newspaper article from 1856 along with a map from the same year showing the terminal's track arrangement. Additionally, I referenced our collection of the stockholders' reports – that was it! Our archives contained no drawings or photographs of this building. The newspaper article described the new station as being two hundred and eighty feet by eighty feet: dining hall (96' x 26'), gentlemen's waiting room (40' x 26'), ladies' waiting room (20' x 26'), ticket office and agent's room (between waiting rooms, no measurements given), gentlemen's washroom (alongside their waiting room), ladies' dressing room (alongside their waiting room), baggage room, barbershop, bar (north end of the building), and corridors. The dining hall could accommodate two hundred patrons. A corridor connected the kitchens with the main building. Steam kept the food warm in the hall and provided heating; plumbing featured hot and cold running water; and the station had gas lighting. There were platforms near the track on the south side of the building; at the steamboat landing, there was a train shed. The writer remarked that passengers could board their train immediately after disembarking from their boat.

Alrighty, the twenty-six-foot depth of the dining hall and waiting rooms stands out. I would place the dining hall on one side of a central corridor of the south end and opposite, the waiting rooms (sixty feet in length), ticket office, ladies' dressing room, gents' washroom (thirty-six feet in total length or twelve by twenty-six individually, hypothetically). The hotel section is on the north end (plus the bar and barbershop). One hundred and eighty-four feet remain. Divided into ten rooms of 18.4 feet width per side (twenty rooms total) seems strange. I would give twenty feet to the bar and barbershop, making one hundred and sixty-four feet available for sixteen rooms (approximately) ten feet in width. There is no mention in the article of a second floor nor whether the company used brick or wood for its construction. Since it occupied a place below the bluff, I am inclined to think wood – the soil there being fill. I could be wrong since there is a stone retaining wall holding back fill behind the present-day locomotive shops. When workers dismantled the riverfront station in the early 1870s, the company builder used doors, wainscoting, and hardware from this building in the “joint companies’ station” in the upper yards. No plans for that station survive but there are a few photographs of the exterior. Being of recent memory to some, I at least have some confusing oral descriptions of its interior. At times, it is a frustrating assignment: conjuring up the description of anything from the past from fragmentary evidence is always incomplete, perpetually subject to revision, and vulnerable to dispute. Even the present is less knowable than the arrogant didacts claim. We tread on the threshold of the unknowable perpetually, our assumptions about the world are nothing more than an assembly of orphan pieces from numerous jigsaw puzzles. Enough philosophizing! I am picking up unhealthy habits.

Making history

Sunday, July 7, 1914. Uncle Roscoe decided that Miss Tedder's erroneous revelations about the long-missing railroad men wasn't entirely a waste of our efforts. In other words, he saw an opportunity to cobble the truth into favorable press for the company. Sheriff Smallwood and Coroner Cordell were happy to play along. The Messenger reported how the dedicated employee Agnes Tedder led the gentlemen to the "neglected graves" of the Murray ancestors, "one of the first pioneering families to settle the untamed wilderness north of Port Unity" – untamed wilderness? [Ha-ha-ha!] The county commissioners proposed a special ceremony for the reinternment of the remains at County Cemeteries, and Sam Culver is commissioning "scrupulous reproductions" of the tombstones based upon the weathered fragments of the originals. The article also included scholarly commentary by Dr. Willis on the botanical research of Andre Hecke, mostly transmitted second hand by his friend Dr. Andrews. Even Mr. McNair contributed a paragraph about the building techniques employed by the early settlers of the county, noting little of the Murray-Hecke House dates from this period. Missing from this marvelous work of journalism is any mention of the missing men; and while Miss Tedder received credit for the find, the Messenger reporter never spoke with her. ["My daddy was fibbing about those graves he found while poaching on railroad land. Demon Pete had nothing to do with them – had me worked up all for nothing! – only regular dead folks laid out in a row – busted-up tombstones and all. That's what I get for running my mouth! If those bones didn't happen to be special, no doubt I'd be out of a job. That's the truth!"]

Monday, June 8, 1914. My task for this week is preparing elevations for the several buildings based upon my research and sundry artifacts found during recent construction projects

so Frank and Louis can make scale models of the 1835 and 1856 terminals. They already built two hypothetical landscapes for the buildings based upon the railroad's deed for the Haynes land, a soil survey, the 1847 and 1853 maps of the town which include the terminal, and various clues they found in the annual reports. Why is this necessary? Mr. McNair wants the models placed on display behind glass in the station so the travelling public might see how the site changed over seventy-nine years. Uh-huh, he put me on the spot! I must make three problematic decisions: the size and appearance of the first station (the former Haynes plantation house on the bluff); determine whether the original locomotive shop was the same building in the 1850s lithograph and the pre-1880 photograph (or not); and find evidence supporting my conclusion that the 1856 station was two stories. Concerning the latter, I justified adding a second floor because the builders intended that the dining hall serve two hundred, and the ticket department figures in the annual report during the mid-1850s showed that approximately that number of through passenger tickets were honored daily, both travelling north and south. In either case during that era, most passengers had no choice but stay overnight to take the steamboats or connecting line. Since the station was near the steamboat landing, formerly marsh, a wooden structure seemed best. Since I didn't find any mention in the annual reports of funds spent on a new locomotive shop, it is a safe guess that the original stood until the company replaced it in 1885. As for the Haynes plantation house, the older section of the nearby Murray-Hecke House seemed a safe choice: two stories, each having four large rooms and a hallway in the center, timber frame construction, two chimneys on both side ends of the house, a high front porch with steps (I imagine there was a drive), and a back porch in two levels facing the river. The foundations must have been ballast-stone like most houses in eighteenth century Port Unity, the Murray-Hecke House is a good example even with its later additions. Every ship in port was dumping them on shore in piles so

“never squander a good thing while you have it.” Also, these houses had a separate building for the kitchen in case it caught fire. The practice is commonplace in rural areas.

Alrighty, unless somebody discovers a firsthand description of the Haynes plantation house, nobody can verify or challenge my speculative rendering. That sounds like Ella’s definition of a legend. For most folks who pause to gaze at our models, they wouldn’t question the accuracy of the representation insomuch as most do not question anything presented to them as history. Good enough. [*There’s something awfully dangerous in that statement.*]

More mysteries from the past

Thursday, July 2, 1914. Drats! Uncle Roscoe is still curious about the Demon Pete stories. While dismissing the spectral aspect of the rumors, he considers the possibility that a flesh and blood fiend prowling the railroad district is plausible. This week, he asked me to speak with Sheriff Smallwood by telephone when time permitted. Nothing was pressing about this matter. I decided to casually bring up the topic when Deputy Chester Wilkes came by the station police office to take a catch to jail. Tuesday was a particularly busy day for our officers, so he visited twice. Mr. Wilkes said the only odd thing reported in the district during the last two years was the periodic nocturnal appearance of a Peerless touring car. Nobody in the county owns one. The dubious “neighborhood committees of safety” made the complaints but deputies on the regular patrols have not noticed anything out of the ordinary. As for fiends, these “committees” are always on the lookout for unsavory types venturing into their domain. If there was one afoot, he would find better hunting north of the terminal. This is where the hole-in-the-wall establishments spring up from time to time. Sheriff Smallwood cleared out most during his first year in office, but they come back.

As for reports of missing persons, Mr. Wilkes redirected my attention to the number of “accidents” which occurred in the mostly uninhabited woodlands between Haynes Town and the Northeast River Bridge. Since 1890, twelve people including John Culver and Fred Wheeler drowned in the swift current. While some careless folks from the neighborhood fell off the bridge while crossing over to Northeast Depot, at least six others had no reason to be in that section of the county. Furthermore, the sparsely inhabited woodlands between the railroad bridge and Culver’s Lodge are rumored to be a haven for bootleggers. I found all of this interesting, but it had nothing to do with the disappearances in the railroad district... or it did. Of the six men who drowned in the river, all had residences in Northside neighborhoods on the edge of the district. Very strange.

The railroad men who disappeared in 1904 and 1908, Zack Colton, Billy Fields, and Gil McEvers, were young single working-class men who Major Durant described in his report as “dependable employees who perform their duties in a competent fashion.” They were not exceptional and no one who knew them thought their character or inclinations deviated from the ordinary. They did, however, work under the same foreman and maintained the same section. Mr. Wilkes thought the elusive “special constables” could have abducted them. Special constables? They took Florence Phelps but decided to leave her drugged unconscious on the road leading to her farm. What? [This is news to me!] Since Sheriff Smallwood took office, these imposters abducted three residents of the Northside effortlessly using counterfeit arrest warrants. Florence was the only person kidnapped by the “special constables” who was fortunate enough to give her statement to Sheriff Smallwood. Mr. Wilkes suspects that they are professional criminals for hire whose specialty is masquerading as lawmen. He did not think they worked for the late Dick Browning.

“Sheriff Browning and Judge Hastings had their own method for making their problem folks disappear. The deputies rounded up the men on minor charges, and then took them directly to the county farm. There is no telling what really happened after they arrived. We have signed confessions, and Judge Hastings handed down the sentences, but there the paperwork ends. Browning never properly registered these poor fellows in the courthouse jail. His predecessor Sam Dupree started the practice to replenish the labor on the road gangs but kept the deed marginally legal. The judges sentenced tramps, vagrants, drunks, and other undesirables to brief periods of hard labor and the court extended their stay for the slightest transgressions. Nobody cared about these unfortunates. Before Dupree, the City of Port Unity used convict labor for street grading and putting down paving block.”

Deputy Wilkes did not have time for further discourse on this ugly topic, but he suggested that Uncle Roscoe look beyond the unlikely possibility that a fiend is singlehandedly perpetrating flawless random abductions. We should examine the organized entities capable of accomplishing the crime efficiently, namely, any party deeply invested in the railroad district who stood to lose heavily on account of what somebody did or knew.

Reluctantly, I consulted our leading historian on local intrigue and dirty laundry, the glorious Liz. She was more than pleased to explain the convoluted and scandalous recent history of “The Family” beginning with the ascendancy of the local populist kingmaker Boss Joe Griggs. Some of it was already too familiar.

“Mr. Griggs is the protégé and successor of Pete Bresnahan, the assumed leader of the Popular Coalition political club who mysteriously disappeared. It’s rumored he skipped town

after assaulting Mrs. Lavinia Hall. That's what my daddy heard somewhere – just hearsay if you ask me. Have you ever met Lavinia?"

"Never."

"Few have; Lavinia keeps to herself in that sprawling house across from corporate headquarters."

"What's her place in the scheme of things?"

"That lady is the matriarch of 'The Family': the second wife of the late Captain Elias Hall, shipbuilder, whose son Claude married Lucy Culver, sister of Sam Culver. Claude died of pneumonia and Lucy has delusions, so Lavinia and Jane Deschamps set up an arrangement: Jane took Lucy's boy Miles, and Lavinia continues to care for Lucy. A Smallwood relative named Emma Waddell helps out with the latter. That girl also works in our freight office. Lavinia's twin sister Beatrice was married to John Culver. John went on a hunting trip in Northeast Township with Alan Deschamps, nephew of Georges Deschamps, and his friends. Mr. Culver drank too much, walked out on the railroad bridge, fell off and died in the river. Alan was married to Catherine, the sister of Anna LeQuire Levesque, whom you know died under suspicious circumstances. When Alan and Beatrice married, it was scandalous! Jane was born a bit early, too – she was in my graduating class. Would you believe Sam and Jane are business partners?"

"What does that have to do with Boss Griggs?"

"Originally, Captain Hall, John Culver, Alan Deschamps, and the 'old guard' conservatives supported the Popular Coalition. Their candidates ran in opposition to the newcomer career politicians."

"During the leadership of Bresnahan?"

“Yes, but they soured on him during the building of the new courthouse. I’m not sure of the particulars. Easily, it is the most opulent public building in the region, not to question the magnificence of Unity Station but the building is extravagant and was too costly. All the improvements of the Bresnahan Era were ambitious and a drain on the public coffers. The great boondoggle of the time according to the conservatives was County Highway, so they opposed it. Now, we need it.”

“Was Griggs more pliable?”

“In the beginning, yes. Then again, who else could they back? The businessmen and industrialists of the City of Port Unity backed candidates with a ‘progress’ platform. ‘The Family’ wanted to set back the clock. They discovered too late that the true ‘Griggs Machine’ agenda was transforming county government into the politicians’ personal money mill rather than rally the vassals to low taxes and reestablishing the old social hierarchy. By 1904, Boss Griggs managed to fill every department with his shady cronies. Sheriff Dick Browning was a stinker, and Judge Hastings, too. Conservative District Attorney Kerns charged Commissioner Fred Wheeler with taking bribes for rigging contracts for County Highway. Judge Phelps, whose niece Clarisse married attorney and former state senator Herbert Smallwood, presided over the case – “Bert” is the baby brother of Lavinia and Beatrice. Somebody shot Judge Phelps behind the courthouse during the trial, and nobody came forward to identify the culprit. It was a boon for Wheeler. Judge Hastings stepped in, the witnesses for the prosecution vanished, and Hastings threw out the case. Certainly, it was a last-ditch effort to save Wheeler. He could have implicated other commissioners. The whole business set in motion the reform movement. Fred turned up later floating in the river. Now, we get to Judge Phelps’ daughter Florence. I went to college with her – we called her Boudica. She pestered Sheriff Browning about the stalled

investigation into the murder of her daddy. He ignored her, so that girl started asking questions on her own. Browning arrested her for interfering, but instead of taking her to jail, he locked Florence in the jail wagon heading for the county prison farm and didn't file charges until the overseer at her place paid a visit to Mr. Smallwood. She was set free for trial, and Smallwood took the matter up with the state attorney general. Browning dropped the charges. Sam tasked two of his 'private detectives' with helping Florence uncover evidence of a conspiracy devised by Griggs to obstruct the murder investigations. They found nothing. Despite all the finger-pointing, no prosecutor has ever been able to pin any mischief directly on him! Florence then assumed the guise of an office girl and took a job with Whitaker & Blackwell. She hoped to find proof that Browning extorted cash from businesses in the railroad district to 'protect' their property. One day, thugs masquerading as 'special constables' abducted her in broad daylight. After keeping her in a dark cellar for several days without food and water, the men dumped her unconscious on the drive leading to her farm. A year passed before Florence told Sheriff Smallwood about her ordeal. Are you following me so far?"

"Yes, but most of this part is new to me."

"I'm sure; Lavinia and Sam kept the whole sordid mess from the public. 'The Family' protects its own. I suspect that is the same reason why the Messenger never printed anything about the disappearance of Mr. Bresnahan."

"Goodness!"

"Sheriff Smallwood started off by investigating Dick Browning, but the scoundrel shot himself before the district attorney could file charges. He then rid county government of turncoat employees planted by Griggs."

"That didn't cripple the Popular Coalition."

“Of course not. Cato Houghton, son of its original financier, ousted Boss Griggs, and then installed Orrin Blackwell as the new chairman. He opposed Griggs and Browning but did not start working against them until ‘Old Man Calvin’ died. Cato is a true believer in the cause and the dead opposite of his daddy. As a businessman, he has interest beyond the family metalworks, namely real estate. This is where it gets sticky. After the Great Fire of 1883, the company sold a large parcel of burnt-over timberland between Rose and Mulberry stretching from First to Ninth. Alan Deschamps bought all of it, and then sold lots to Elias Hall and a whole block to Consolidated Cotton Works, now Cowan Cotton & Fabric. Captain Hall sold some of his lots to people wanting to build businesses and family houses. The rest of the lots Alan sold to a group of five speculators, Joe Griggs and his second Fred Wheeler being two of them. They pooled their money to buy most of it. Quickly they threw up tenements to house workers from the depot and cotton works. Eventually, an unhealthy neighborhood formed between Sixth and Ninth. Nevertheless, the county begrudgingly relinquished to the city the brick-paved corridor through North First Avenue. Cato and company are holding on to their land waiting to sell at a premium, but Sam Culver and Jane Deschamps are not going to buy any of it until annexation, which at that time the imposition of city building codes will force the landlords to sell low. One exception: Sam is hoping to make a deal with the owner of the cotton works, the anticipated site of his grand hotel. It’s ideal: a whole block located near the station. His goal is to revive the annexation referendum and support reform candidates to unseat the rest of the holdouts in county government.

“Anybody else in this stew?”

“Griggs’ loyalists, disinterested hirelings, Laine County bootleggers, dubious outside businessmen, and the local criminal element: just because Browning and Wheeler are gone doesn’t mean it’s safe.”

“Is that why Uncle Roscoe insists that I learn how to thwart kidnapers?”

“No. We must acquire those skills because it is in the best interest of the company.”

Monday, July 6, 1914. Since Myrna finished her project for Mr. McNair, I persuaded Uncle Roscoe to let her continue my research on Pete Bresnahan at the Messenger office while I speak with Sheriff Smallwood about Dick Browning and the “special constables. He agreed. Major Durant is assigning Seargent Quince to accompany her. [Hurrah!] Phillip Quince is the latest addition to her list of “favorites.”

For the next few days, Mr. Hennessy wants me to find out more about Pete Bresnahan and the disappearances attributed to Demon Pete (since I had nothing better to do). He considers it a suitable exercise for me similar to preparing architectural drawings from vague descriptions in archival documents. I’ll survey the periphery of the unknowable, sorting what is plausible from tommyrot. Needless to say, the boss expects me to describe my methods before starting. Alrighty, remember my philosophizing? No?

It is awfully sensible to know the difference between what we don’t know and what we can’t know, why knowing this or that is worth knowing, and there might be some interesting facts strewn along the path that leads to nowhere, so general knowledge is useful for determining what the unknowable is not.

That's a good start. What do I know about Demon Pete? Nothing! It follows that knowing what I can't know has one answer: I don't know. Ella and the Major spoke with Agnes Tedder about him, but that girl heard about the rascal from her late daddy, and he was wrong about the graves on the Murray-Hecke land. Nester Horne never mentioned Demon Pete in his book only the ghost of Mr. Bresnahan, and he made that up. So, I do know something, and it is all tommyrot. Pete Bresnahan is more knowable. Since he was a public figure, the *Messenger* ought to have plenty of articles about his speeches and whatnot. The Popular Coalition offices are on the north side of the Fourth Street Bridge so paying them a visit might help. It's my chance to talk Sergeant Quince into accompanying me on a stroll – ha-ha-ha! So, nobody knows what happen to Mr. Bresnahan: that's something I know that I don't know but it is not necessarily unknowable just because nobody else knows. Hmm, right... I must first prove it meets the conditions of the unknowable. This isn't easy! The unknowable is forever incomplete. We know some parts of it, whereas the unknown is potentially knowable if we knew where to start our inquiry, or it never occur to us. The conclusions are tenuous and unsatisfying – not a wise undertaking for the obsessive sort – but there isn't any continuing. You have parts of something, hopefully more but not enough. The knowable part has parts and parts of parts, some could be parts of something else entirely, connect to a missing part, or turn out to be tommyrot. Some parts appear to fit together nicely until you find one with the perfect fit; and then, you have an orphan part left over which doesn't fall into place anywhere. That means you're further away from knowing than you thought: the boundary of the unknown expands to include any part fitting with your orphan part, and to those parts, and more to those, and so on until everything knowable

fits together or you discover it's something completely different. Uh-huh, you wasted all that time trying to solve the wrong problem.

The Messenger office

Wednesday, July 8, 1914. Today, Sergeant Quince accompanied me to the offices of the *Messenger* to research articles about Pete Bresnahan. The newspaper maintains files on city and county government, regional businesses and industries, clubs and social groups, churches, notable individuals, and advertisers. There are indices for each year containing the titles of articles for each number. We spoke with the current editor Mr. Arnold Benson, who at the time of Mr. Bresnahan's disappearance was working in the office.

"Pete was a dashing fellow of middle age, eloquent, a persuasive orator, and possessed a magnetism which is difficult to explain. Those who knew the man basked in his presence regardless of whether they agreed with his politics. He presented his views like a lawyer delivering his summation. By contrast, his partner Joe Griggs addressed audiences like a tent-revival preacher, appealing to the coarser element of the electorate. Tirelessly, they stumped for their candidates through the county in every imaginable venue. That was during the years leading up to the triumph of the populist ticket. Neither one of the pair ran for office but they campaigned for all the chosen who supported the platform of the coalition. Read a few of our articles on their speeches and you'll understand. Many were of the mind that Mr. Bresnahan was a man who belonged in Congress rather than squandering his talents on local politics. Not so with Mr. Griggs. He was a rebel-rouser then but found his 'calling' making deals behind closed doors, sometimes with the assistance of a couple of heavies from the docks. After Pete disappeared, Joe stopped giving speeches. Justifiably so: he lost his counterweight."

“Sir, can you tell me how Bresnahan and Griggs came to work for the Popular Coalition?”

“Calvin Houghton, Cato’s daddy, brought in Mr. Bresnahan from somewhere. Strange as it might seem, *The Family* played a part in getting the local populist started. It was a way of bringing the small farmers and working men back into line like in the old days. It’s a familiar game: the aristocrats mobilize the commoners against outsiders and upstarts. It really didn’t take hold until the *Panic of 1893*. Nonetheless, the coalition made strides over the previous decade leading up to the depression. From there out, Boss Griggs managed to get more men elected to the county commissioners, including Fred Wheeler. The break with *The Family* came after Dick Browning became sheriff. Cato, unlike his daddy, thought Griggs was taking the coalition in the wrong direction. After the 1912 election, the two came to an agreement where Griggs remained president of the coalition in name only. What else do you want to know?”

“Is there anything substantial behind Nester Horne’s story about Pete Bresnahan?”

“The part about Pete and a married lady having a romance is true but he was no Lothario. She was the young second wife of a brutish old tyrant. The *Messenger* never printed any of this because my predecessor considered the report hearsay, and the lady alleged to be his lover was recovering at County Hospital. Hoodlums beat her unconscious behind her house. The paper didn’t need a lawsuit, so we let it drop. Nester fictionalized real events in his books to get around the snags, sometimes cobbling together a tale from several unrelated reports. He was a good journalist who mangled the truth to avoid the wrath of the local lords and make money off of those who simply wanted an entertaining story. Pay a visit to Leona Jenkins at the library in city hall. She might help you sort things out. However, let me caution you against making any connection between this unsubstantiated romance, Bresnahan’s disappearance, and the ghost stories. You’ll find the name of the assaulted lady easily, but she might not be the unnamed

woman in Nester's tale. Might I add that she is alive, wealthy, and cantankerous. Your company attorney might want to leave this matter be."

"Is there a living man behind the Demon Pete legend?"

"Who knows but I'm certain it isn't Pete Bresnahan. The fellow was middle-aged when he disappeared twenty-four years ago. Most of his associates passed away: Calvin Houghton, Fred Wheeler, John Culver, Alan Deschamps, Nat Hastings. That leaves Joe Griggs, who is old, and well, you'll have to go through the coalition's membership rolls for the rest. Nester published his *Ghost of Pete Bresnahan* story in 1897. Residents of the Northside reported the first 'Demon Pete' disappearances to Sheriff Dupree in 1901. After Dick Browning took office in 1904, he didn't bother investigating the reports so the 'neighborhood committees of safety' took it upon themselves to find the mythical fiend. Aside from harassing strangers strolling through their domain, they never found a reliable eyewitness to the suspected abductions nor uncovered any evidence suggesting one. Sheriff Smallwood took up the neglected unsolved missing person cases upon taking office and discovered about a dozen he deemed unsolvable. That includes those of your missing railroad men. The unexplained cases of drowning in the Northeast River are a similar but unrelated mystery. They first occurred prior to the disappearance of Pete Bresnahan. The count excludes those the coroners attributed to accidents."

"So, Demon Pete is a manufactured villain derived from another fiction, both created to explain individuals going missing. It's not unusual for a person to up and go without informing their neighbors. In this section, they leave by train, most taking with them some baggage. Our company maintains records on baggage receipts. Another means of leaving is by oceangoing ship or riverboat. The several packet companies maintaining offices in Port Unity also keep records of

their passengers. In both instances, it would be impractical to set to work on a list of people alleged missing with no compelling evidence supporting their neighbors' suspicions.

"I would concentrate my efforts finding out more about Pete Bresnahan. He was, or still is, a man. Demon Pete is merely an idea."

We spent about an hour perusing the clipped-out articles in the Pete Bresnahan file. Most were summaries of one of his speeches, usually filling a fraction of a single column. I wasn't impressed. Furthermore, the articles contained more details about the candidates on the coalition ticket than Bresnahan. After May 1890, there is no further mention of his name in print until the ghost stories. I found an article about the lady assaulted by hoodlums and beaten unconscious. The culprits were unknown ruffians from the docks. The *Messenger* withheld her name, but the location of the crime was "near the carriage entrance to her home on North Second." Upon returning to corporate headquarters, I examined our 1890 volume of the fire insurance maps for Port Unity. The only residence with such an entrance then and now was the home of Captain Elias Hall, at the corner of Mulberry and North Second. Drats! Mr. Benson was on the mark when cautioning us about prying further. The late captain's wife is Lavinia Smallwood Hall, big sister of Sheriff Smallwood and aunt of Jane Deschamps! Lavinia owns the Hall Shipyard, formerly the Hall Shipbuilding Company.

Later in the afternoon, I spoke by telephone with Orrin Blackwell, the present chairman of the Popular Coalition. He said Pete Bresnahan resided in the Benoit-McElhenny House, then owned by Calvin Houghton. It also served as the office of the coalition. The financial records of the organization show regular payments to Mr. Bresnahan for his services which included administrative duties. That is all. Texts of his speeches have not survived, if he committed them

to paper, nor does the coalition have any of his correspondences on file. So, the man's celebrated orations went the way of the man. He was a "political agent for hire" according to Mr. Blackwell not a zealous proponent of the cause as some would claim.

The Nester Horne Papers

Saturday, July 11, 1914. I planned to visit the lending library in city hall to speak with Leona Jenkins on Thursday, but Mr. McNair kept me busy. Fortunately, it is open from noon until three on Saturdays. I recruited Frank and Louis to accompany me there since Sergeant Quince must supervise the patrols until the arrival of the afternoon trains.

Miss Jenkins is the granddaughter of Nester Horne, so I anticipated she was in possession of his personal papers, drafts of unpublished works, and sundry notes. My assumption proved to be true. For every story in his book there was a research file associated with each title. They contained loose newspaper clippings, notes jotted down on slips of paper, correspondences, and handwritten drafts. Frank and Louis helped me comb the *Ghost of Pete Bresnahan* file for anything that did not appear in the published story. Immediately, we realized that Mr. Horne was drawing from unrelated newspaper articles from various times and places to fill the gaps in the plot. For example, an article published in the *Messenger* months before Mr. Bresnahan disappeared concerns the mysterious lights observed by locomotive engineers and firemen. They called it "the ghost train," recalling a fatal accident which took place at the Buzzard Creek trestle in 1854. Oh-my, our fellows had it wrong – ha-ha-ha! The accident happened when one of our trains took the inclined plane at the terminal too fast and ended up in the river. No fatalities but the conductor suffered a broken arm. Furthermore, there has never been an accident at Buzzard Creek in the history of the company. More pertinent to my inquiry was the article about the

unnamed woman beaten by hoodlums. Mr. Horne circled “North Second Street.” In his notes he writes, “Mrs. S., the housekeeper, told me that Mr. H. became enraged with his wife and struck her repeatedly about the head, leaving her unconscious in the backyard. His son found her, loaded her into his buggy, and then took her to the hospital. When the lady awoke the next day, she claimed hoodlums wanting money assaulted her. I paid Mrs. S. and promised not to include her name in my article.” Scribbled across the text in another hand is “We can’t print this!” So, it looks like Mr. Horne was a reporter for the *Messenger* at the time. Miss Jenkins directed my attention to another note. This one was an interview with Mr. P. a resident of the Northside.

A certain gentleman of the neighborhood gave me twenty dollars to rent my buckboard and a mule for a day four years ago. It was the first week of June. That’s a lot of money for just a day! He said his boy would come by for it at dark on Tuesday. Strange, I thought, but nobody questions the big man. I’m not going to say who he is. When the boy came for it, he was jittery and a bit queasy. I asked him what’s the matter. After a while muttering, he said a ‘highhanded old bastard’ roped his papa into taking a rascal out of town. I told the boy that was enough I didn’t want to know any more. “No, sir, they don’t plan to string him up! After the relatives of the lady give him a whipping, they’re rowing him across the river and sending him on with a warning not to come back.” Oh, it’s those things. The next day, the boy brought back my buckboard. He smelled of pine smoke and liquor. I asked him whether they gave the fellow a good send-off. “I suppose so. Even the lady’s sister stopped by to join the party.”

Mr. Horne scribbled on the page that he paid Mr. P. five dollars and two bottles of good whiskey for the interview. Once again, he promised to keep the man's name secret.

The last of his notes, dated February 17, 1894, describes how Mr. C. "went on one of his weekend drunks" and ended up stumbling into the *Messenger* office. He wanted to place a notice in the Sunday issue: "PETE WAS AN INNOCENT MAN!" Momentarily, Mr. D. entered, pocketed the form on which Mr. C. scrawled the notice, and took him back to their carriage. Was that all?

I was expecting to find a note concerning the old man who witnessed a group of men taking Pete. Did Mr. Horne make that up, too? Frank set to work trying to find Mrs. S. and Mr. P. in the 1890-91 city directory. The occupation of Mrs. Alma Simms, widow, who rented at 301 Walnut, was a housekeeper. That's only a few blocks from the Hall residence. No other woman listed under "S" performed that type of work. Unfortunately, the directory entry did not include the name of her employer as with those of men. Louis considered the possibility that a married woman performing the same work might not appear in the directory. It listed three men with last names beginning with "P" who resided in the Northside: Luther Polk, a foundryman who worked for Houghton Metalworks; Jack Poisson, owner of a grocery; and Richard Peterson, a track crew foreman. Louis found none of them in the current city directory; however, Mr. Poisson's grocery was still in business at the same address, Milly Fremont, proprietor. Mrs. Simms was absent. That was it! We left the library with a few pages of notes for Mr. Hennessy.

Ella appreciated our digging on the Pete Bresnahan mystery, but she told me that her uncle is no longer interested in considering more sketchy hearsay from deceased witnesses who infer a crime might have been committed by deceased suspects and various unsubstantiated reports of

dubious abductions perpetrated by mythical somebodies. As for the disappearance of the railroad men, we uncovered no evidence of wrongdoing. “To prevent careless persons toppling off the Northeast River Railroad Bridge, Mr. McNair can design a railing for the sides and add a pedestrian walkway.” Good enough!

We are due time off from our practical education. In addition to catching up on practicing our parlor tricks, we resumed writing our amusing comic adventure serial called “The Misadventures of Mademoiselle LeQuire and Lady Speight.” Mrs. Keane does not want us to get underfoot so we must spend most of our time at home in Myrna’s workshop. After she leaves for the day, we churn ice cream and bake cookies! [Occasionally, Liz and the McNair boys drop in on our “raucous tea parties” – ha-ha-ha!]

Intriguing discovery

Saturday, February 20, 1915. In late November, Sam Culver had laborers clear away some of the undergrowth surrounding the ruins of the old Haynes Plantation house. Having received accolades for his efforts to have the bones of the Murray family moved to a prominent spot in the county’s main cemetery, he was determined to do likewise with the remains of another founding family, the Haynes of the Northeast River. Why not? He owned the land. From the start, everything was going well. His men found the burying ground close to the ruins of the house. The tombstones, toppled over and broken, remained in close proximity to their graves and the text carved into them was intelligible. The director of the cemeteries and workers from several funeral parlors commenced the exhumation of the remains along with coffin fragments, hardware, and sundry personal artifacts. Dr. Charles J. Cordell, the county coroner, stood by observing the enterprise and the esteemed Professor Willis was present to answer questions

about the Haynes family. In all, the crew exhumed twenty-one graves dating from 1732 to 1854; and off to the side, a lone unmarked plot containing a peculiar skeleton. There were no fragments of a casket; the tatters of clothing, tarnished belt buckle, rotting leather shoes, and a scattering of imperishable items suggested a more recent burial. On close examination, Dr. Cordell found a bullet hole in the rear of the skull, exiting the eye socket. It was time to bring in Sheriff Smallwood. This was a murder victim! So, did these remains belong to Pete Bresnahan?

Dr. Cordell was able to date the manufactured belt buckle, buttons, and fragments of shoes to the 1880s. It could be Pete but... he needed a description to draw a comparison. The Popular Coalition did not have a photograph of the man nor was there a consensus amongst the current membership as to his physical characteristics. Surprisingly, his image never appeared in the Messenger. Mr. Benson told Deputy Wilkes that Mr. Bresnahan was best known by the coalition leadership of the day, most of which are deceased. Other citizens of the county knew him on sight, but his disappearance went unnoticed until Mr. Horne published his stories; thus, the fallibility of memory can account for the varying descriptions offered by the public. The only person living who could help was Boss Joe Griggs. Despite the animosity he nurtures for the sheriff, Mr. Griggs provided Deputy Wilkes with a detailed description of Mr. Bresnahan in writing. Dr. Cordell acknowledged that it was accurate for the skeleton's height and build but that could easily apply for dozens of average men. The case remains unresolved at present. The coroner stored the remains in the basement of his office. They are eventually destined for a plot in Potters Field when no longer needed in the investigation. Even so, he received several inquiries from individuals wanting to buy the skull for display as a curiosity. Goodness!

Without a doubt, Granddaddy James knows local politics. I asked him whether he remembered anything about Pete Bresnahan. He recalled hearing the name but never met the

man. However, he had many irritating encounters with Calvin Houghton, Fred Wheeler, and Dick Browning. His descriptions of each man's form and physiognomy were entertaining. At this point, I am beginning to suspect that Pete was an ordinary fellow who performed his work in the wings and became legendary after his disappearance, more precisely, because Nester Horne embellished his reputation.

Mr. Hennessy told us not to spend too much time thinking about the case. Aside from having nothing to do with the railroad, Sheriff Smallwood needs the testimony of eyewitnesses and more physical evidence to determine everything from the identity of the man whose bones Sam Culver's crew exhumed to who shot and buried him. At present, the legend of Pete Bresnahan is a distraction insomuch as his fiendish mythical counterpart Demon Pete misdirects our efforts.

Uncle Roscoe is no longer interested in Pete Bresnahan, the Demon Pete superstition, and the "special constables" abductions. The latter is Chester Wilkes' obsession. Finally, Mr. Buchanan wants us to avoid sharing anything of a scandalous nature concerning Lavinia Hall. He has nothing to worry about. We are not about to wager our reputations upon anything in Nester Horne's notes. Besides that, we start college in August. Liz told Myrna that we would become accustomed to the quiet evenings, clean air, and frosty temperatures in a few months. Before the first snow, my sister will enjoy hiking the nearby mountain trails in search of "pretty rocks."

MYSTERY OF THE LETTER

. Hello, ladies; it's me again, Myrna Eloise Levesque, that very tall, bespectacled, eccentric, brown-eyed brunette who is sometimes pretty except getting messy is easier. I have a talent for figuring out maddeningly complex problems, too. Do you remember what we called our secluded college in the western mountains? No? That's fine. My beautiful bad-influence sister Ella and I graduated last week, Class of 1919 – hurrah! See, that didn't hurt; well, not much. I still cannot speak French fluently. What mattered more over the last four years was our summer apprenticeships in the sundry vocations of railroading. Remember, our family owns the company. Having received the required measure of academics, now we are returning home to start regular jobs in administration or do something useful. Mr. Oscar Buchanan, chief attorney of the company and Liz's daddy, sent us a letter. In case you don't remember, Liz is that raven-haired beauty with sparkling blue eyes and everything else in perfect proportion. Ella can't stand her, but I get along with Liz fine despite a few mean tricks she played on me way-back-when. Ironically, those predicaments always provided me with ample possibilities for socializing with handsome young fellows. Never let "inconveniences" get in the way of an opportunity – ha-ha-ha! Alrighty, back to that letter.

As Ella expected, Mr. Buchanan indefinitely assigned her to "Major" Richard Durant's station police supervising the lady officers. Since setting up their headquarters, this is the position she wanted. The company hired the first three in the fall of 1916, and now there are eight. The ladies are more efficient than the old men and the public likes them. I qualified as an officer, too, but Major Durant had exciting plans for me: that's right, ladies; working alongside him with the railroad detectives! After thwarting saboteurs' attempts to wreck Number 435, I'm ready for anything. Unfortunately, Granddaddy James decided that my practical education in the

family business was becoming more dangerous than practical. Uh-huh, I'm pushed off on the Office of Chief Inspector Hennessy in the "administrative palace" where Mr. Buchanan can keep an eye on me.

A perplexing assignment

This morning Chief Inspector Hennessy threw me for a loop! Upon my arrival, I found Major Durant seated in the anteroom in the desk usually occupied by Liz. He said that she was off performing some clandestine service on the line, an unusual task for a corporate matriarch since we are not supposed to perform our duties away from Unity Terminal. The reason became clear during our conversation: she was secretly escorting an endangered records clerk from the freight office to another depot on the line. Very unusual! After reissuing my credentials, the Major ushered me into the office.

"Welcome back, Miss Levesque. Did you happen to read the Saturday morning edition of the Messenger? 'The Battle of Sandyfield Cutoff' is of particular interest to us. The article describes how several deputies led by your friend Chester Wilkes engaged a contingent of armed men attempting to ambush the jail wagon on its way to the courthouse. The previous evening, an anonymous informant described the plot in detail to Deputy Phales. Prior to the skirmish, we altered our plans which dovetailed with those of the sheriff. Major Durant had a part in it, so, at the opportune time. This is the tail end of a collaboration over several months though for the sake of maintaining secrecy we were not privy to certain particulars and contrarywise." What?

"Without going into detail, the sheriff completed his half of the arrangement. Mr. Buchanan wants us to prepare a detailed report on how he proceeded and whether his methods were productive. Sheriff Smallwood agreed to give you access to the pertinent files and permission to

document the progress of his investigation. Our joint agreement still stands. For the time being, this is an inquiry. We have certain concerns about unwanted ears afoot so, be discrete.” Ears afoot? Alrighty, here we go.

Mr. Hennessy was deliberately reticent for a reason: both he and the sheriff entered upon their collaborative undertaking suspecting somebody within their respective spheres was a turncoat. The warning from the informant proved both men correct while at the same time added to the problem an unanticipated party who successfully overcame the secrecy of the conspirators. The latter having set in motion their scheme with spoiled intelligence, thus the warning transmitted through the informant was irrelevant. Yet, it revealed the existence of others who had an interest in the outcome of the collaboration. At that moment, I was thoroughly confused but Mr. Hennessy assured me that Major Durant would clarify something in a roundabout fashion and provide his assistance.

Without further delay, Major Durant and I rushed down the front steps of the administrative building and then briskly walked to his automobile. On the drive to the sheriff's office in the courthouse, the Major told me to ask all the questions. Mr. Hennessy kept him in the dark about his dealings with the sheriff until Thursday evening. Even then, only to ensure that nobody tried to prevent Deputy Phales from putting Emma Waddell on the overnight express. Emma? I know her!

“Sir, is she a witness?”

“Definitely, Mr. Hennessy told me this morning that eleven men died trying to get to her, five of them at Sandyfield Cutoff after she and Liz made off. Until the sheriff apprehends those behind the plots, Miss Waddell isn't coming back. Nobody but Mr. Hennessy and Liz know where she is for now, not the sheriff, not me, not even Mr. Buchanan.”

“Why Liz?”

“She’s incorruptible and follows orders to the letter.”

“Good enough. How did Emma end up in so much trouble?”

“In September, Emma delivered a letter from a friend of a friend to Arthur Mallet, the manager of the cotton works – now a sandy lot – and that was that, except she told her friend Myrtle Pruitt about how Mr. Mallet said the letter saved his life. He mysteriously disappeared in January. In March, Mallet’s fiancée Annie Cowan showed up at the *Messenger* office with a letter from him describing how a ‘woman from the railroad’ had information that an unnamed party was conspiring to do him harm. Myrtle told all the ladies in the freight office that Emma was the woman who saved him. There was intense public interest in the Mallet case, so word spread. Sheriff Smallwood had the *Messenger* print a statement in the next article concerning the case that Emma was not the ‘woman from the railroad.’ Too little, too late; it didn’t work. A drifter tried to abduct her at gunpoint outside the freight office. Deputy Wilkes shot him dead. This morning, Chief Inspector Hennessy felt it was the appropriate time to reveal more of the sheriff’s secrets. In April, somebody sent five men to spirit her away on their old boat. She jumped off. When the crew tried to run her down, the boiler exploded. Deputy Wilkes rescued her from the river before the newspaper men showed up.”

“Goodness!”

“The sheriff hid Emma for about a month while Mr. Hennessy made his plans. In the meanwhile, Liz interviewed the ladies in the freight office to plant the notion that somebody took the girl. In the railroad district it must be their mythical fiend, Demon Pete. That brings us to her secret departure.”

“So, the boss wants to know how the sheriff turned a simple plan to protect Miss Waddell into a war.”

“More or less. Before we meet with Sheriff Smallwood keep in mind the railroad’s interest in this case is narrow: the first attempt to abduct Miss Waddell took place on company property; the explosion of the steam tug damaged one of our warehouses and a vessel tied off at the company wharves. Unless there is evidence connecting the disappearance of Mr. Mallet to the attempts to abduct Miss Waddell we are not concerned about letters or letters about letters or unsubstantiated rumors of conspiracies. The Arthur Mallet disappearance is something separate. After all these months, the sheriff has yet to uncover one clue supporting any assertion that the man was a victim of a crime or even himself. Don’t worry about it. Chief Inspector Hennessy gave you this assignment because you have assisted Sheriff Smallwood and his staff under the provisions of the joint agreement. It is an inquiry which serves administrative necessity but not needed immediately. Besides that, reviewing documents and interviewing the sheriff and his personnel is safe, and Mr. Buchanan wants you to finish your detective training. Nobody expects more from you.”

The Major parked behind the courthouse and entered through the rear door. An impressive flight of steps ascends the walls to the jail three stories above. The offices of the Sheriff’s Department are located in the basement. Ella told me that the lobby of the main entrance was magnificent, its marble grand staircase the center piece. I wanted to see it! Not this time. There was work to do. After we exchanged cordialities, Sheriff Smallwood escorted us into an office for a discussion. This was not going to be easy. Major Durant told him that I was asking the questions. He was merely along to assist me. Fortunately, I had a method: work backwards. It also helped that Sheriff Smallwood was a frequent visitor to our house. Granddaddy James

happens to be the biggest donor to his campaign fund – ha-ha-ha! We began by reviewing the events of Thursday, May 15.

The paperwork shell game

At half-past six that morning, Mr. Hennessy telephoned the sheriff to inform him that Liz was free to accompany Emma to her new life. Sheriff Smallwood explained what happen next.

“Miss Waddell voluntarily signed herself into protective custody on April 18. The women’s division of the county prison farm has a section for those awaiting trial, and separate from their compound, a brick building reserved for special prisoners. It has its own walled-in courtyard. Usually, we hold those sentenced to a term in the penitentiary there until the state arranges transportation. In this division, it remains empty most of the time. To my knowledge, there was not a safer place to keep Miss Waddell; and might I mention she ate well, dressed in comfortable clothing, and had diversions to occupy her time. Only the head matron and the administration of the division had the required paperwork, and we did not register her in the courthouse jail. That is a flaw in our procedure which my corrupt predecessor used against his enemies. It worked well for making our young friend disappear. As an added precaution, I assigned Matron Margaret Cole to be with her at all times. Nevertheless, I suspected for some time we had a turncoat at the prison farm so getting the ladies safely to the train was risky. Since the division’s administration receives the paperwork submitted to the office of the head matron the next day, I had another delay to utilize. Also, with a form signed by me, matrons and deputies can assume custody of a prisoner anytime providing that the head matron or head jailor receives a receipt accounting for the transfer.”

Sheriff Smallwood thwarted the turncoats with these forms. Major Durant and I examined each. At nine o'clock on the morning of Thursday, May 15, he dispatched transportation orders for Miss Waddell and Matron Cole in the jail wagon pouch. There are four motorized jail wagons, two at the courthouse and two at the prison farm. The form had the ladies riding on the Friday afternoon run to the courthouse. The head matron sent her paperwork in a pouch to administration at five o'clock Thursday evening; and later, Deputy Phales presented the sheriff's orders to transfer custody of Miss Waddell to him and a form instructing the day matron to dispatch the noon jail wagon empty. This was the plan from the beginning regardless of what day Mr. Hennessy arranged a train. Earlier that evening, Sheriff Smallwood learned that the turncoat took the bait.

A go-between acting on behalf of political boss Cato Houghton telephoned a warning that "the pirates" planned a raid on the jail wagon to prevent the sheriff from putting Miss Waddell on a train. Pirates? So, when did Deputy Phales receive news of the impending ambush from Cato's informant? At nine o'clock on the evening of May 15! Deputy Phales telephoned Sheriff Smallwood at his Port Unity home on the Southside. The sheriff immediately called Mr. Hennessy. Major Durant, who had been silent up to this point, offered to fill the gaps inasmuch as he could. Initially, Mr. Hennessy planned to have Miss Buchanan take Emma on the northbound evening express the next day. He had the Transportation Department prepare the paperwork that morning. But by midday, changed the unscheduled stop from the Eighth Street crossing in the upper yards to Haynes Town Station on the insistence of Sheriff Smallwood. Upon receiving the warning, the sheriff wanted to postpone. Mr. Hennessy insisted upon advancing her departure. He then telephoned Mr. Deschamps, the Master of Transportation, who in turn, telephoned the night manager of the Passenger Train Department to revise the paperwork

for the unscheduled stop at Haynes Town Station. That evening, Major Durant's task was to secure the transfer of Emma to the northbound overnight express. After telephoning Liz, Mr. Hennessy drove to the Buchanan residence on Chestnut Street ten blocks away to give her a ride to Unity Station. Meanwhile, Sheriff Smallwood told Deputy Phales to prepare the form to transfer custody of Miss Waddell to Elizabeth Buchanan. Since the form required both parties' signatures and the legal documents from his safe, the sheriff drove immediately to the courthouse. Miss Waddell had to sign the document when she no longer needed protective custody. Knowing doctrinaire Liz, it occurred when they arrived at their destination. The sheriff also took with him an envelope containing cash for Emma. She was leaving behind everything.

Deputy Phales set out for the prison farm around ten o'clock, a half-hour trip by automobile. After presenting his credentials, he asked the gate guard to telephone the night head matron. It was eleven o'clock before he could leave with the ladies for Haynes Town. Major Durant was there to open the station for them because it closed at six o'clock. After that time, the express trains stop only with special orders. The prison farm is only a few miles away. That was the ruse. Deputy Phales and Head Matron Cole escorted her out to the platform to wait for the overnight express. The Major stood lookout at a distance with a rifle, ready to defend the party from the platform while they were inside the baggage car. When the train stopped curious passengers started gawking from their windows. Once the party was inside the car, Liz signed the necessary documents, and then Deputy Phales and Head Matron Cole return to the platform and waited until the train was out of sight. That's all we know about Emma until Liz returns. Major Durant secured Haynes Town Station and then reported back to Mr. Hennessy who was waiting at Mr. Buchanan's house. Phales and Cole returned to the courthouse. Success! Sheriff Smallwood

recommended that I interview deputies Phales and Wilkes as well as Matron Cole for a more detailed overview of the particulars.

“Following the first attempt to abduct Miss Waddell, we labored to keep her identity concealed therefore the official reports deliberately obscure some details. When our investigation exposes the plotters, we intend to amend the record. Nevertheless, Mr. Buchanan should know since the railroad has an interest in the outcome. That is, in a discreet fashion.” The sheriff is well-practiced in trickery. Having me interview all the principals informally ensures that my inquiry remains unofficial. “In a plot involving outside participants somebody familiar with the victim must serve as guide for the rest. Emma was not well-known, nor did she frequent the establishments in the railroad district. Aside from fellow employees in the freight office, she was friends with Florence Phelps, a recluse who rarely leaves Northeast Township. Matron Cole, and deputies Phales and Wilkes were the only members of my staff who knew her true identity. She told us about two irksome private detectives in the hire of a lady who assigned them the task of watching out for her, with questionable effectiveness, I might add. That aside, the plotters could have easily hired local hoodlums to maintain surveillance of Lavinia’s house to achieve their ends. They don’t need to know Emma, merely recognize her.” Emma stayed with the widow Lavinia Hall, big sister of Sheriff Smallwood. “Whether through exposing the turncoats, ferreting out the local collaborators, or coaxing these private detectives out into the open, any one of these choices set us on the right path wherever that may lead.” Indeed, he means three unmarked paths.

I managed to inaugurate my new notebook in a respectable fashion and had yet to hear an account of the “Battle of Sandyfield Cutoff.” Sheriff Smallwood said Deputy Phales could take me to the front Tuesday afternoon in addition to explaining why the tattler referred to the ambush

squad as “pirates.” To finish off the day, Major Durant and I were paying a visit to the Transportation Division at Unity Station offices to examine the paperwork.

Presently, Sheriff Smallwood’s investigation is at a standstill: Miss Waddell does not have a guess as to who is behind these abduction attempts but she suspects they want to know the contents of the letter she delivered to Mr. Mallet; nobody came forward to identify the eleven dead men (the sheriff is convinced they are outsiders); Mr. Houghton’s informant received his information second-hand from two dubious “private detectives” who work for an unnamed woman; and none of Mr. Mallet’s correspondences with Miss Cowan contain enough details to be useful. If “we are not concerned about letters or letters about letters or unsubstantiated rumors of conspiracies” then discovering how the turncoats became aware of the arrangements to spirit Miss Waddell away is our path forward. It took ten and a half hours to reach the ears of Mr. Houghton’s informant, but the head matron at the county farm had not submitted the sheriff’s false transportation orders until five o’clock Thursday afternoon. The informant had yet to intercept intelligence concerning it when speaking with Deputy Phales. However, the ill-fated “pirates” received it in time to rush out into an ambush at Sandyfield Cutoff. They thought Emma was still in the county meaning Mr. Hennessy’s changes never reached them. Since the jail wagons run between the county farm and court twice every weekday, how could any turncoat determine that the sheriff planned to move Emma? Furthermore, trains occasionally transport prisoners. How could the turncoat know that one was taking her? Well, if we have our own turncoat collaborating with the one at the county farm it’s easy. All the unscheduled stops for prisoners occurred with the westbound evening express (the state prison is on that line); the overnight express is northbound. Both trains follow the same northerly route as far as Wayne City but there the westbound splits off onto the Central trunk. Needless to say, somebody

working at the county farm would know that, yet something still doesn't fit. The sheriff dispatched orders for the transport of Miss Waddell and Matron Cole at nine o'clock Thursday morning. He made no mention of putting Emma on a train. It is possible that the turncoats never knew. The conspirators might think she is still in the county – ha-ha-ha! No wonder Mr. Hennessy was so cautious with the details of his plan.

Our “smart boys” Frank and Louis came by for dinner. Both served in a railway engineer regiment during the war. They regaled Granddaddy James with stories of their exploits. My friend Sergeant Phillip Quince of the lower yards patrol paid us a visit later. He, too, joined up with officers Billy Hubbard and Albert McComber. Billy is staying on with the military and Albert took a job as a policeman in Wayne City. Captain Johnston is stepping down from the station police after these many years to perform clerical duties in the Freight Department warehouses. Phillip is in line to take his place. After Mrs. Keane left, all of us went to the kitchen to cook fried chicken. Granddaddy James and the boys made the iced tea and helped us clean up. Wanting to leave no evidence, we took our feast to the backyard. Frank collected the bones in a bucket, eventually burying them behind a hydrangea bush.

Unexpectedly, Locomotive Designer Elbert Skinner and Chief Engineer Edmund McNair dropped in for a visit. They were too late for fried chicken, but Ella and Louis were churning ice cream, another breach of Mrs. Keane's dietary rules. Granddaddy James remarked that those who dictate what you eat and when you eat it are intent upon controlling how you think. Uh-huh, you think about what you could be eating – ha-ha-ha! At some point in the conversation when we returned inside for coffee and ice cream, Mr. McNair described his study of the damage caused by the concussion when the steam tug's boiler exploded near the company wharves. It shattered

windows in our warehouses and scattered debris throughout the lower yards and on the opposite bank of the river. Some vessels at the company wharves were damaged. His calculations of the forces exceed that of a small boiler bursting. It was an antiquated river tug with a hull made of oak without ironclad sheathing, but the blast should have taken off the deck and wheelhouse, leaving the hull still a float. Instead, the force tore it apart. He suspected explosives destroyed the tug. Mr. Skinner, somebody familiar with boiler explosions, agreed, adding that an old low-pressure boiler was too small to produce that much force when it burst. From what he heard, Hall boatyard built it in the 1850s to tow wooden hulled barges and assist other vessels upriver. He also was convinced that the tug was carrying explosives. Granddaddy James thought somebody deliberately blew up the tug but like other mysterious violent occurrences over the years, villains made it appear accidental. The official investigation by the harbor authorities was inconclusive. Wanting to know more, I asked the gentlemen to explain the circumstances surrounding the event. It was then that I learned about the “pirates.” A group of armed men from upriver stole the old tug from the layup basin of the salvage company, navigated the Northeast River down to Port Unity, and then proceeded to go on a rampage on the North Docks, taking an unidentified woman hostage. She escaped. Once they returned to the tug to make their getaway, the boiler exploded. The harbormaster called the men “modern-day pirates” when the reporter from the Messenger interviewed him. I anticipate Deputy Phales has a better story.

The battlefield

Tuesday, May 20, 1919. This afternoon, Deputy Tom Phales led us to the site of the ambush on County Highway. It is located immediately northeast of the Sandyfield Cutoff, the dirt road heading south to the crossroads at Sandyfield, about seven miles from Unity Terminal. A quarter

mile through the woods by an old wagon road is Haugh Landing; and from there, a horse path follows the riverbank for about a mile. The whole of the Northside of County Highway is woodlands for three miles. This is where the five men chose to await the jail wagon. On the morning of May 16, Chester Wilkes sent six deputies up to the prison farm in automobiles at six o'clock. At ten o'clock, he had another three take their position on the horse path in preparation to come up on the men from the rear, and then deployed a group of four deputies on Sandyfield Cutoff. The ambushers crossed the river in a rowboat and came up from Haugh Landing. From there, they advanced through the woods. At a quarter-past one, the leader of the men came out of the trees and fired a shot in the air as the jail wagon approached. The driver and deputy atop took cover. The detachment of deputies on the horse path fired a volley. Gradually advancing under cover, they blocked the men's escape through the woods, and then eventually drove them out into the road. Deputies from the jail wagon fired on them; and when the survivors retreated towards the cutoff, Wilkes and his colleagues wiped them out. Deputy Phales sarcastically remarked that Chester Wilkes was doing a splendid job of foiling the spring offensive.

"The newspaper article makes this whole mess seem like a surprise attack on the jail wagon with the aim of breaking out the prisoners. It was a trap! From the beginning, Sheriff Bert wanted to put deputies inside that empty jail wagon in case of trouble; but after Cato's man called, he wanted Chester to capture the ambushers. The editor of the *Messenger* calls them pirates because it excites the public imagination. About the only similarity between these fellows and the crew in the tug is they came up from the river. They put up a steady fight. No surrender! The last man went down shooting! Our men were cautious at first, advancing slowly from the rear. They fired in sporadic volleys whereas the ambushers expended their rounds in a continuous willy-nilly fashion – lots of bullets but none hitting their mark. These out-of-town fellows brought in to do

the dirty work are inexperienced dupes, no doubt lured in by the prospect of making quick money. I think they're pushed off wasters from the sticks. Emma and Florence Phelps were onto something about bootleggers bringing moonshine from stills upriver to one of the landings north of the railroad bridge. We suspect that they are Laine County boys. Monday, Sheriff Smallwood is sending me upriver to meet with Sheriff Jackson and the manager of that salvage company that had the tug. I think you should come along. I'm leaving on the morning mail train."

"Mr. Hennessy might consider it."

"I plan on taking the coroner's photographs of Chester's recent batch of dead men to see whether Sheriff Jackson recognizes them." Major Durant nodded.

"Yes, we're going."

"Good. That brings me to another matter: this business about passing letters to Arthur Mallet might fit one way but Emma did other chancy work on the side. To start, Emma was a topnotch spy who clued us in on the location of every secret mart of vice in the county. That girl soaked up every detail! We could use her no more than eight times a year, but she brought in a full load every time! Her acting was flawless, changing from Lavinia Hall's prim demure darling to that cracked-brain wild-girl from the sticks who everybody liked. Luckily, nobody saw through it, I hope. A bigger problem for her was Florence Phelps." That Florence Phelps had a hand in the mayhem is disconcerting.

"Florence? That lady can't stay out of trouble."

"She *is* trouble. Emma might be a bit daring and unpredictable, but Florence is maniacal and occasionally dangerous. Both grew up as farmgirls, but Florence attended that fancy women's college with Jane Deschamps."

“Yes; we call it ‘the cold storage locker for young ladies.’ Our Miss Buchanan was in their graduating class, too.”

“I had the pleasure of meeting her on the platform at Haynes Town Station. As you might recall, Florence gets into binds by snooping on her own. She can’t let go of the murder of her daddy. Never mind that she ends up in jail or nearly killed! Chester tried to help her with these investigations, but that lady has no qualms about taking big risks. Imagine ‘Shoot-em-up’ Wilkes shying away from danger. Say, I remember when you pulled that station officer out of the line of fire when that crazy fellow went on a rampage.”

“That was protective instincts. I did it without thinking. Bravery requires some apprehension. That’s Chester.”

“No doubt about that. He needs it! Trouble knows where to find him whereas Emma goes looking for it. They were an odd team. Did Sheriff Smallwood tell you that the woman taken hostage by the ‘pirates’ was Emma; and before that, a man held her at gunpoint?”

“Not specifically, but it wasn’t necessary. I am still working on the events following those incidents, particularly the period that Miss Waddell was in protective custody. I would like to interview Matron Cole, examine a jail wagon, and visit Emma’s quarters at the county farm.”

“That’s easy. We still have your paperwork for assisting the department with investigations. You can ride along when Margaret makes her run after court and take the tour of the women’s division. She’ll be delighted to hear the full story about Wayne City Junction. That’s one for the history books by my reckoning!” Uh-huh, that’s why Mr. Buchanan is keeping me on a short leash. “I can take you home when you’re done.” Major Durant nodded.

“That sounds fine to me. How about Thursday?”

“I’ll expect you in the afternoon, say, between three and four. There is one last entanglement you need to hear. Emma was associated with two mysterious ‘brothers’ claiming to be private detectives who drove about the railroad district at night in their fancy Peerless automobile. Very strange! I wouldn’t put it past Emma to join up with them.”

“Goodness!”

“Sheriff Bert thinks those fellows are out to start a war. Emma told me that they ride around the county sabotaging the moonshine trade. They blew up stills! Even invited her to come along to watch! She said they snatched Griggs’ bookkeeper Emmet Hamer and threatened to bury him alive if he didn’t let them know about who was on the secret payroll, you know, bribes. They work for ‘a lady!’ That sounds like crazy talk, but Emma doesn’t make things up.”

“Sir, is there anybody other than Miss Waddell who can corroborate these accusations?”

“Hamer could but don’t expect it.” Do you like surprises? Deputy Phales has an unending supply of them. Sandyfield Cutoff is not the best place to have a conversation, particularly since it was recently a battlefield, but I was willing to endure the heat, dust, mosquitoes, and unsettling artifacts to hear more. “Emma had a fellow named Ned Moseley.” I met him once! “He was a foreman in the freight car yards or something like that. In early February after an ice storm, he had an accident. That tore Emma up! She was never quite herself afterwards. Going back to September, the week when the flu started, Emma was with Ned in that stand of trees opposite Potters Field having some fun right-on past dark. Ned dosed off on her just when things were getting good. That didn’t sit well with Emma, so she decided to go home, leaving him sleeping off his drunk in the woods. On getting to the dirt road which runs on the east side of County Cemeteries from Mulberry to the marshaling yard, she saw the Peerless parked alongside the entrance to Potters Field. Knowing Emma, she had to take a peek at what was going on.

Alongside a freshly dug grave ready for the first flu burial, she saw two men and a well-built lady wearing a veiled hat holding a railroad lantern. Between ‘her boys’ was Emmet Hamer, tied hand and foot, his mouth gagged. Those two threw him face-first into the grave and one started shoveling in dirt. Emma ran off but turned back to get Ned. The light from an arriving passenger train cast light through the trees, revealing her. The boys chased her down, she tried to fight, but one rapped an arm around her from behind and lifted her feet off the ground. The other went back to the automobile to get cord to tie her up. Emma isn’t tiny. She’s limber, fast, and can put up a fight. These ‘bruisers’ as she would say were your height and had the physicality of wrestlers. Before they could get her tied, Ned rushed up from nowhere and started landing punches on them in a frenzy. To make a long story short, they got away, and ended up hiding behind the Presbyterian church on Chestnut until making their way back to North First. Emma kept it from Sheriff Bert until much later.”

“Why?”

“Folks in the railroad district started seeing the men in the Peerless not long after Dick Browning shot himself. Sheriff Bert sent deputies out there to watch for them off and on, but nothing. It looked like Demon Pete had company – more superstition. Emma first heard about them from the ladies in the freight office when she started work. After 1916, the reports stop coming. That’s when residents of the railroad district brought back Demon Pete. If anybody disappeared, Pete took them. Ned decided to go to Mr. Hamer’s warehouse to ask to see the boss. He was alive and well, ready to sell anything. That turned out to be a bicycle. Ned left his in the woods and wasn’t about to return to get it. About a month after his accident, say, the middle of March, Emma got on the wrong side of Cato Houghton. The next day, she was walking on Mulberry, and the Peerless started pacing her. When she started to run, Adam stepped out from

the corner of a building, grabbed hold, and tossed her inside like a sack. Even when she was on good terms with ‘her boys’ Adam and John, if she hesitated about going along or gave them lip, they manhandled her into their automobile. Anyway, the first time, they took her on a ride out of town. Along the way, Adam explained that ‘The Lady’ wanted them to apologize for scaring her silly and now their assignment was guaranteeing her safety – ‘her guardian angels.’ When you have a chance to chat with Emma, she will recite word-for-word their entire conversation. That’s her gift but I imagine carrying around all that junk in her brain might account for not being quite right. Here is what she told me about those two: these ‘private detectives’ go by Adam and John Smith, claiming to be brothers. It’s hard not to laugh. They are vigilantes if you ask me. Emma said they took a few years off to join the war before the rest of us decided it might be the right thing. They’re crusaders! Right. Chester’s official report on Emma and the ‘pirates’ mentioned two strangers with a boat who helped him rescue her from the river. First off, they didn’t rescue that girl, they pulled her into their boat. She is a good swimmer. Adam and John were the strangers! Furthermore, they helped Chester search for Emma after she slipped out to look for Mrs. Hall’s crazy daughter-in-law Lucy. Some of your officers found Lucy in Unity Station waiting for her dead husband’s train. As for that poor dupe who tried to abduct Emma without help, she pulled her ‘lady pistol’ on him before Chester came rushing in for the kill.”

“Sir, we had better stop for the day.” I was getting a headache. Mrs. Keane would throw a fit if I didn’t arrive home in time to dress for dinner. It’s hot so I must soak in the bath and wash my hair before putting on a nice dress. Frank and Louis are joining us.

After Mrs. Keane left for the evening, Ella brought out her “contraband” pound cake to have with our coffee. While enjoying this forbidden treat, Granddaddy James gave us a

comprehensive review of old news. Of particular interest to me was the mysterious disappearance of Arthur Mallet, the manager of Cowan Cotton & Fabric Company's warehouses, gins, and compress located near Unity Station. In early September, he announced that the company was closing its Port Unity facility at the end of the year. After stopping production briefly during the flu, the cotton works was running at capacity around the clock. In late October, somebody smashed the windows in Mr. Mallet's Commerce Street home and then his clerks took over the offices, bringing business to a standstill. Some workers joined them. They were protesting not only the loss of their jobs but the complete dismantling of the plant. Many had worked there before Cowan acquired it in 1909. Not only that, but it was also the last remaining mill south of Unity Terminal. The working-class neighborhood it supported would thereafter fall to progress as the business district of Port Unity was pushing outward toward the station. Alfred Cowan sent in his man Thomas Lawson with private detectives to remove the agitators. Sheriff Smallwood stepped in with his deputies to prevent a riot. Within days, the leaders of the unrest relented, and then production resumed. After the mill closed in late November, Mr. Mallet stayed on to oversee the dismantling of the machinery. He left Port Unity on December 23. In early January, Alfred Cowan telephoned Mr. Hennessy claiming that Mr. Mallet returned to Port Unity by our railroad on January 2, and sent a telegram stating he was leaving on the afternoon express on January 6, but never arrived. Mr. Hennessy conducted a thorough investigation, finding no clue that he travelled to Port Unity, not even a baggage receipt. Mr. Cowan then contacted Sheriff Smallwood. He too was unable to uncover proof that Mr. Mallet came to Port Unity. None of his acquaintances saw him, his name didn't appear on the register of any of the hotels, and nobody expected him. If the man disappeared, it happened somewhere else. Arthur Mallet was handsome, charming, and well-liked in Port Unity society. He was once engaged to marry

Florence Phelps, but she broke it off. He later became engaged to Annie Cowan, the daughter of his boss. Several articles came out in the *Messenger* about the man after his disappearance, but Granddaddy James did not follow the story.

Like Mr. Hennessy and Sheriff Smallwood, I was inclined to agree with their assessment: lacking any supporting evidence, it appeared that somebody waylaid Mallet elsewhere. That is, if he didn't skip off. Ella remarked that the case reminded her of the disappearance of Pete Bresnahan in 1890, a mystery proving to be more difficult to solve as of late. In 1915, Coroner Cordell said the bones of the murdered man found in an unmarked grave on the old Haynes Plantation fit the available physical description of Bresnahan, but he could not prove it if the need ever arises.

We heard about the men in the Peerless from railroad workers. They first appeared in 1912 when Dick Browning was sheriff, not after his untimely demise. Granddaddy James said both Sam Culver and his stepsister Jane Deschamps hire private detectives. The Popular Coalition has their neighborhood "committees of public safety" in the Northside, and the sheriff employs spies like Emma. The various "outside businessmen" have their tattlers, too. Since the completion of Unity Station and other improvements to the terminal, several parties prize real estate in the railroad district so they need "ears afoot" – ha-ha-ha! Anticipating that the north end of the Port Unity business district will expand to the terminal, Sam Culver and Jane Deschamps are acquiring whole blocks. Cato is buying up parcels strategically, expecting to sell them at a profit to Sam. The county commissioners continuously block annexation efforts by the city to preserve a major source of their tax revenue. If there are spies and turncoats in the company, it is a predictable hazard of doing business on contested ground. Still, Deputy Phales remarks about

two specific “private detectives” are disturbing. Stirring up a war might be their plan: they blew up stills, threatened Joe Grigg’s bookkeeper, intercepted communications from everybody’s turncoat, hmm, right, they wanted names from Griggs’ secret payroll, and they use Emma as bait for luring adversaries into traps. They were in an excellent position to break the tenuous entente between the political and the criminal. Despite Sheriff Smallwood’s statements to the contrary, Miss Waddell could have made a host of enemies: the political bosses’ crooked crews of obsequious lackeys, the “outside businessmen” who challenge Mr. Houghton’s feudal order in the Northside, and the Laine County bootleggers. I don’t think the sheriff considered the possibility that different parties or several in collaboration perpetrated the three attempts to abduct her. Likewise, the “private detectives” might be employed by a coalition of disparate stalwarts, say the Port Unity muckety-mucks, *The Family*, and the “committees of public safety.”

Much to my dismay, Ella mentioned in passing that Boss Joe Griggs the fallen old kingmaker of the Popular Coalition was dead. Like his friend Fred Wheeler, fishermen found his body washed up on the Laine County bank of the Northeast River. This was in early-May. Since nobody has seen him much since the Election of 1912, many were surprised that he had not died earlier. Orrin Blackwell remains the chairman of the coalition and Mr. Houghton, as always, is the chief financial backer though the movement has been in decline since the beginning of the decade.

During the summer of 1914, Chester turned his attention to the unsolved missing person cases spanning a decade. We had one man go missing from a track crew in 1904, four years later, two from the same crew disappeared. From 1904 through 1913, six residents of the Northside, all businessmen, never came home. In 1912, the three witnesses in the Fred Wheeler bribery case

vanished after an assassin shot Judge Phelps. A few months later, four “special constables” arrested Florence Phelps on Mulberry Avenue in the presence of many witnesses. It was an abduction. The men held Florence in a dark structure like a cellar, deprived of food and water, drugged, and then left unconscious on the drive leading to her farm. Between 1912 and 1915, the “special constables” abducted four men from the railroad district. The “committee of public safety” stopped the “arrest” of a fifth man. Statements from the relatives describe the same: well-dressed lawmen with official-looking badges and credentials, carrying side arms and handcuffs, presenting arrest warrants, and driving a Hudson *Model 33 Torpedo* touring car. Chester is convinced that the “special constables” are responsible for all these disappearances. After their confrontation with the “committee of public safety,” the faux lawmen never returned to the Northside. Fortunate for them! Everybody was wise to their game.

The vanishing act

Friday, Mr. Hennessy allowed me to spend the rest of the day continuing my inquiry. At the moment, nothing else was pressing. This time, instead of waiting for the Major to give me a ride, I boldly told the boss that I was taking the trolley to the courthouse. He approved providing that a station officer came along, so I asked Sergeant Quince. Deputy Phales met us at the rear of the courthouse. There were two open jail wagons parked nearby. Excellent! I wanted to look inside one! He was more than happy to honor my request. Much to my surprise, they are nothing more than modified motorize furniture vans clad with a thin layer of sheet metal textured to look like armor and painted locomotive black. The interior smells like seasoned wood. Long benches extend to the front on both sides. The large, barred openings above seated head height, left, right, and front allow for light and ventilation: I imagined something more constrictive.

“Climb inside and take a seat.” Since this was my long-overdue chance to be inside one of these notorious vehicles, I did. In front of each bench were six evenly spaced rings bolted to the floor. “Since it is necessary to handcuff the prisoners in front to prevent them from falling face-first, we use leg irons.” Now, that sounds more like a proper jail wagon! “They keep the passengers from attacking the staff assigned to manage them.” Deputy Phales asked whether I wanted to stick around until court lets out at five. If so, he could include me in the next trip out to the county farm.

“Do you have the paperwork for me to sign?”

“Yes. Riding out and back in the guise of a matron or prisoner?”

“How did you send Miss Waddell out?”

“I think you know. Still want to go?”

“Uh-huh! You know my style.” Aside from acquiring some authentic appreciation of the dreaded ride without having committed a crime, it might give me a clue as to what Sheriff Smallwood isn’t telling me, and unofficial details Deputy Phales would rather have me find out for myself than ask him. I removed my uniform jacket and hat, and then handed them off to Sergeant Quince along with my satchel. “All done: no company papers, equipment, money, notebook, hidden handcuff keys, lockpicks, accoutrements, ginger snaps, and playing cards – ha-ha-ha!”

“What about that dandy pick in your hair?” Oops!

“Right you are, sir.” After removing it, I placed it in Mr. Quince’s hand. “Don’t lose that, Phillip. I’ll need it when the ‘special constables’ kidnap me. There; all done!”

“Best let the sergeant report back to your boss. This might keep you occupied until about nine o’clock, so I’ll drive you home.”

Emma signed herself into voluntary custody after her narrow escape from the tug. She knew exactly what it meant: incarceration at the prison farm for a month or longer. To ensure her safety during the trip, the staff treated her as anybody in custody. I intended to do the same for a few hours. While Deputy Phales filled out my paperwork, Matron Cole prepared me for the ride. Off the vestibule of the women's wing is a large room for storing the women prisoners' clothing, supplies, and the matron's equipment. After telling me that I was receiving "light treatment" like Emma, Matron Cole told me to remove my jewelry, tie, and hair ribbon. Before placing these articles in a wooden box, she entered them in a ledger. The next step involved surrendering my blouse, skirt, and shoes for cursory search of my undergarments and person, including any pins hidden in my tangles. I passed my examination!

"This is a nice blouse! What say we put it aside folded neatly along with the skirt and shoes in the box? I'll fit you out with one of the quality dresses our gals wear in court." I agreed. It wouldn't feel authentic without the appropriate attire. "Six-foot even? Right?"

"Minus a half-inch, call it six." Momentarily, she returned from the back with a fresh "quality go-to-court dress," canvas slippers, and a gleaming pair of wrist traps. Once dressed, I needed some minor adjustments to look my part.

"There; shake out that hair. That's it. Can you see without those glasses?"

"Up to a distance, say, about twenty feet."

"They can go in the box, too." That's it! Once again, I blithely raised my vulnerability up several notches for a role. "You do not look like the same gal! Here, I picked out some pretty bracelets especially for you." Uh-huh, shiny new ones. "You'll like the smooth rounded edges. Nice! Ready to try them on for size?"

"Certainly!" She laughed, and then proceeded to cuff me.

“There! What do you think?”

“Perfect fit, comfortable; lightweight tempered steel, and the locking mechanism is first rate; yes, my hands are definitely secured, and I especially like the nickel finish.”

“Think you can escape this pair?”

“Hmm, let me think. That depends on, well, not in this situation. I’d say no, absolutely not.” It looks like a certain overly high-spirited lady found herself thoroughly caught again! “I’m ready to go!”

“In that case, I’ll unlock them at half-past eight this evening. Sign the ledger and then at the bottom of this sheet. After I hand it off to Tom, he’ll do the rest.” I did. “You’re now in custody at twenty-of-five.” She pinned a card to my dress. “This is your number for the ride. Don’t lose it. It matches your paperwork.”

“Is that about how long it took with Emma?”

“More or less. Sheriff Bert brought her over at half-past seven, soaked to the bone. Immediately, Tom started preparing her paperwork. There wasn’t the time to waste on the unnecessary. Sorry, no hosing down, no jailhouse soap, no getting a good going over. The jail wagons left at five o’clock with the prisoners from court and were due back at half past eight. Emma stripped down, towed dry, and then put the jail dress on. After I fastened on her bracelets, we waited in here while the sheriff arranged an extra trip back for us, leaving at a quarter of nine. It’s listed as personnel transportation on the log. We did not enter Emma into the records here to avoid what eventually happen at Sandyfield Cutoff. I have a few things to do before we go so chat a while with Tom. We’re glad to have you back.” Matron Cole placed me in the custody of Deputy Phales.

“That was quick! You signed early, too. How did that happen?” I laughed and showed him my gleaming new ‘bracelets.’

“I’m a lady who has a propensity for getting herself into binds with handcuffs. No matter: they are a remarkably effective means of curbing my rambunctious nature.”

“Slightly. Sign here and it’s official.” I did.

“So, sending Miss Waddell in the jail wagon had multiple advantages: while mayhem was in full swing on the North Docks, she was on her way to the prison farm concealed from view; your departmental protocols for everybody taken into custody kept her safe while at the same time they prevented her from getting into further trouble; you severed her contact to the outside world so nobody knew what happen to her; and your records indicate Matron Margaret Cole accepted a routine administrative assignment at the prison farm.”

“That’s right; once Emma signed, she vanished. Only the custody part applies to you.”

“Uh-huh, you can be certain that I’m not going to wander off wearing cuffs and a jail dress. After signing myself into custody, taking a stroll could get me charged with trying to escape! I’m caught!”

“You can sign yourself out and so could she. Since Sheriff Bert went home for the day, I suppose it will be tomorrow at earliest before we could get his signature to make it official.”

“No, sir; taking the ride to the county farm and wearing my ‘quality go-to-court dress’ satisfies my suppressed appetite for novel experiences. Besides, it looks like I’m staying locked in these until half past eight anyway – ha-ha-ha!”

“No doubt about it. Margaret put you in the top-notch pair we ordered after your crafty acrobatic burglar slipped out under our noses. They’re made with the resourceful sort in mind, particularly those clever enough to make their own lockpicks.”

“Special precautions for me?”

“Definitely; after you demonstrated how she broke out, I added a note to your file: ‘professional escape artist, use custom order superior cuffs with unique key.’ You’re the first to need them. How’s that?”

“I’m flattered! Tell me more about the paperwork sleight-of-hand with Emma.”

“Margaret presented the protective custody papers for Emma Waddell to the head matron at the county farm. Emma’s name appears in her log as a special prisoner so the administration there had the proper paperwork. It is on file permanently. The sheriff has the document ending her protective custody in his safe. Mr. Hennessy should have those Miss Buchanan had Emma sign. Nobody has all the pieces.”

“Sheriff Smallwood thought of everything.”

“Since she was separate from other prisoners and Matron Cole stayed with her the whole time, only a turncoat handling her file could inform the conspirators. We have narrowed our list.”

“I can imagine my unexpected arrival and sudden departure might prompt a turncoat to communicate the anomaly. When should I expect a visit from the pirates?”

“That’ll be the day! Major Durant told me that few are better trained than the Levesque sisters in confounding kidnappers, and he is confident that any idiot foolish enough to try will regret it. Aside from that, both of you are constantly changing your looks.”

“What do you think of this transformation?”

“Better than the schoolmarm disguise. Definitely more interesting.”

“Excellent; it’s easy: take off my glasses, let down my unruly tangles, put on a jail dress, and get handcuffed. Voila! I’m a dangerous woman. No, I’m not – ha-ha-ha!”

“You had me fooled.”

“At college, I studied acting. It comes in handy in my work with Major Durant, in addition to confusing would-be kidnappers and pushy salesmen. Enough of that. We worked together before, so you know all about me.”

“What’s next on your list?”

“Reviewing the official reports on the other abduction attempts and then interviewing Deputy Wilkes. These ‘private detectives’ are an intriguing addition to the cast. Consider this: if the kidnapers, pirates, wasters, what-have-you think Emma is still here in protective custody, we set a trap for them, hopefully bringing them in alive.”

“Providing Chester has something else to do that day, it might work.”

Deputy Phales escorted me downstairs to the rear of the courthouse to witness the loading of the jail wagons. Picture three chattering women prisoners standing at the rear of a faux ironclad furniture van, all waiting their turn to mount its steps, helped by one of the deputies inside and a young matron standing below. All came from court: the jury was out on the case against one; another received a two-week sentence; the judge sentenced the third to five years at the state penitentiary. Frazzled and testy, this bunch was impatient to be underway. Deputy Phales told me to tell any who might ask that the deputies just arrested me for trespassing, so Matron Cole decided to send me on since there was room. Alrighty, I have some practical experience with that offence. The station officers took me into custody three times for being in a posted area without papers or pass – handcuffs, absolutely! Actually, those times Mr. Hennessy gave me passes but something happen to them, and once Liz mixed up the envelope with one containing his theatre tickets (I think deliberately). Too bad! Rules are rules. Though I didn’t face charges, the procedural manual requires that the officers prepare a report of all arrests. After the third time,

Major Durant had me transfer to his office for station police training. One thing leads to another. Back to my story.

After seating me inside the jail wagon, Matron Cole positioned my legs near the ring and pulled down the pair of irons draped over her shoulder.

“Have you tried on some of these darling ankle bracelets?” Her euphemisms tickle me.

“Yes, ma’am; they are a stylish match for those on my wrists.” She chuckled, held back both my shins with a sturdy arm, and then secured the oversized cuff around my left ankle.

“They’re particularly useful. Besides keeping the prisoner from sprinting off, the irons protect us from kicks.”

“Assaulting an officer? No-no, not me!” She chuckled.

“Alright, time to get back to business: think about disappearing out there; nobody knows what happened to you; some think you’re dead; this wagon isn’t stopping to let you off; when outside your quarters you must have bracelets and be under guard; think about a future without fearing for your life.” After threading the chain through the ring, she shackled my right leg. “In case you get thirsty, I have a pail of water and tin cup. Just ask and I’ll dip some up. Otherwise, sit back and enjoy the ride.” Goodness! Matron Cole gently jerked a knot in me. It’s like the doctor with his two-inch needle saying, ‘It’s just a little mosquito bite.’ The grave implications of the situation were settling in: I’m now trapped in the paperwork stream!

My keeper had me at a disadvantage completely. Without a doubt, even my sister could not break out of the jail wagon. After Matron Cole handed off her keys to the deputy in exchange for her club, he shut us in and padlocked the door from the outside. When the driver started the engine, we received a noxious whiff of motor exhaust. It dissipated after we started moving. I anticipated a torturous baking after the deputy locked us in, but the many barred openings above

vented the heat. Already, my ride in the jail wagon was surpassing my expectations. Having no window to view the landscape made the whole ride disorienting. I sat still, eyes closed, just listening. On the brick paved streets of the city, it was a slow smooth ride. Passing over the Fourth Street Bridge established our location: the sounds of the terminal. The motor was loud, but the women continued conversing over it. One said that it was the seventh time she took the ride. The brick pavement ended abruptly a block beyond the terminal. We were on the so-called County Highway. A long bumpy ride followed. I knew the railroad paralleled the highway on our right, and then crossed it at an angle before Sandyfield Cutoff. By my estimate, the drive had taken us only four miles. For a one-hour trip that was one-fourth the distance or fifteen minutes! Though it didn't feel like it, we were travelling at the proper pace. The bridge over Buzzard Creek at eleven miles was the next noticeable change in the ride. Haynes Town was two miles further; and the turnoff to the county farm, three miles beyond. The jail wagon gently rocked left and right constantly on the gravel highway, and the vibrations were intense. Bumps and holes acting upon the leaf springs felt like riding bareback. The exhausted girl sitting next to me wanted to talk. She had blond hair and blue eyes like Ella, a friendly face, and wanted to spend her two weeks working in the vegetable garden. Her crime was public drunkenness. So, what did I do? Trespassing. "It's a good thing there was room for you. The courthouse jail is terrible!" Right, I could look forward to hot meals, flushing toilets, and walking in the courtyard at the county farm. At that moment, we cross the tracks below the station. Four miles remained until we turned onto the drive leading to the prison farm. I heard the whistle of the southbound afternoon express. The schedule has it leaving Northeast Depot at a quarter of six. That meant we passed Haynes Town.

The turn into the drive of the prison farm was jarring. Our next sharp turn was taking the road leading to the Women's Division. Matron Cole explained that there are two walled-in sections within the main wall: one contained the barracks, workshops, and gardens for those women serving a sentence. They made and repaired the jail dresses and men's uniforms, did the laundry, made the stinky soap, and tended the garden. The other walled in section was for prisoners awaiting trial. It had cells inside a large brick building, a dining hall and kitchen, an office, barracks for matrons, and open-air stalls for bathing. In a separate enclosure, there was a small one-story brick building for the special prisoners. The jail wagon stopped to unload us after it passed through the main gate. The office of the head matron was located there. It was a relief to feel the rush of fresh air when the deputy opened the doors.

"Holding up, Miss Cole?"

"Fine. Do I look as bad as these gals?" He hesitated.

"No. Ready to unload them?"

The deputy removed an envelope from his satchel, opened it, and then called out our prisoner numbers one at a time. Once formally accounted for, Matron Cole unlocked our legs and the deputies from the jail wagon helped us down the steps. The head matron signed a receipt for each, including me, but she also signed the paperwork transferring me back into the custody of Matron Cole. While two of the ladies were escorted to their respective places with free hands, the woman going to prison, and I needed our "bracelets" to discourage our "devious minds from dreaming up mischief" for justifiable reasons: the woman was going to remain secured and under guard when not in a cell until the state police came for her; I was going back so unlocking my cuffs briefly was an unnecessary risk. Rules are rules. Another matron took the other "dangerous woman" to the main hall to receive jail dresses for her stay while Matron Cole gave me a tour of

the small brick building. It had an impressive, armored door; a guard patrolled outside when in use. Inside, there was a spacious area for the matrons guarding the prisoners and two rows of cells, eight in total. At the moment, all were unoccupied. Indeed, the cells had flushing toilets in addition to hot and cold running water. At the end of the aisle between the cells, there was a shower stall. The rear door opened into an enclosed courtyard. The cots in the cells had fresh linens.

“This is it, Miss Levesque. Emma wore regular clothes here not a jail dress. I never locked her cell; but for safety, locking the doors after dark was necessary. She didn’t need bracelets until we left for the train. Both of us slept on these cots, exercised in the courtyard, and read anything the head matron sent over. A guard brought our meals. Emma was constantly chattering but none of it made much sense to me: ‘her boys’ Adam and John showing up late; little boats picking up moonshine from the dock; thugs working for Joe Griggs killed her fellow Ned; she only met Arthur Mallet once; and her long stories about growing up in Northeast Township. That’s all. If you’re not satisfied, I can schedule you for a stay, three days to a week, rides here and back to the courthouse included.”

“Is this where Sheriff Browning kept Florence Phelps?”

“Yes, he kept her in a cell for a month without ever registering her in the courthouse jail. The rascal wanted her lost! Nobody knew what happened to that girl until the overseer at her farm paid Mr. Smallwood a visit. Even then, Judge Hastings wouldn’t let her out on bail. He freed her until the trial after the state attorney entered the picture. Dick Browning decided to withdraw the charges to avoid a stink. The whole mess provoked Mr. Smallwood to run for sheriff and clean out Browning’s cronies. A twist to this story is Sheriff Bert reshaped Dick Browning’s dirty dealings with Florence into a way of saving Emma. Time to go.”

At seven-thirty, the deputies check my papers and then loaded me into the jail wagon. I was the only passenger, but Matron Cole only deviated from procedure slightly: locking up my legs without running the chain through the ring. “You’re leaving like Emma with some differences so expect a short trip.” After Matron Cole signed my receipt, she handed over her keys and we were locked in. My trip back ended abruptly on the drive leading from the main gate to County Highway. When the doors opened, there was Deputy Phales, leaning against his idling automobile. Matron Cole rolled her eyes. “What a pleasant surprise. Take her, and don’t dilly-dally after half-past eight.” With some help, I placed my jostled posterior gingerly into the passenger seat. After signing the transfer of custody papers, Deputy Phales assumed his place behind the wheel.

“Let’s go for a ride.” He put the motor in gear, and then we took off into the waning daylight full throttle. Oops!

So, they took Emma to the station in cuffs and leg irons, not to say it didn’t come as a surprise to me. Sheriff Smallwood avoided mentioning the unseemly details. So what? It’s their usual procedure: that is how the deputies take anybody the station police arrest to the courthouse jail – Emma was no different, I am no different – it makes perfect sense. As a trained officer, I can appreciate the necessity of keeping those in custody compliant and safe from themselves. What about the jail wagon? How could anybody miss those black rolling chambers of shame traversing the county every day except Sunday? So what? Despite being a humiliating and uncomfortable ride, it is a safe way of transporting prisoners, safe for them and safe for those who guard them. I cannot imagine any practical means of keeping Emma safer at the moment she needed to be in safekeeping. Good enough! Now, let’s continue with what I really expected to learn from this quest.

My short-lived visit to the prison farm illustrated the sheriff's method of cloaking Emma within internal administrative inefficiencies. The transfer of custody from Matron Cole to Deputy Phales occurred on a different branch of the paperwork stream, namely, that of the courthouse jail. While the pouch carried by the deputy riding atop the jail wagon contained my receipt, he delivered it to the jail. The head matron at the prison farm received confirmation of the transfer the next morning. If Deputy Phales and I went missing, there was no need to trace the stream back beyond Matron Cole. We were due back at the courthouse jail at half-past eight. She noted that on the receipt. The record of my time in voluntary custody includes transportation orders, receipts, and log entries, all eventually compiled in my file at the courthouse jail. Like Emma, the prison farm also has a file on me, but it only contains my personal particulars and paperwork pertaining to my brief incarceration, fortunately listed as a training exercise. In short, this is how Sheriff Smallwood intended to snare his turncoat and momentarily obscure reality. He is adept at using bureaucratic procedure and legal documentation as traps, which vanish. I didn't fully appreciate the devious nature of the sheriff's method until my few hours in custody. Signing myself out anytime was certain, but it might take a while to navigate the paperwork stream. In the meanwhile, I'm a prisoner until half-past eight. The movement of the administrative gears is all but invisible on the official record. Even so, the trail ends with Emma signing herself out of the custody of the county with the sheriff's legal documents and Deputy Phales' receipt. The latter records the time but not the place. Those details appear in Liz's documents.

On the way back to the courthouse, Deputy Phales raced down bumpy County Highway at breakneck speed to beat the clock. This tour was definitely an adventure!

"I'm sure you didn't take a ride in the jail wagon just to satisfy your 'appetite for novel experiences.' You wanted us to replicate our game."

“Certainly, but after a year in the cold storage locker, I am ready for any novel experiences coming down the pike. You can slow down now.”

We arrived at the rear of the courthouse a quarter-hour before the jail wagon pulled in. Deputy Phales unlocked my legs so I could ascend three stories of steps to the jail. At half-past eight exactly, I signed myself out of custody. Matron Cole unlocked my cuffs, and then took me back to the women’s wing to retrieve my personal possessions and identity. In short order, she repaired my appearance. Well, not quite: the afternoon-long trip left me disheveled and messy beyond remedy, but she at least restored my devious schoolmarm look. Upon my return to Deputy Phales, he presented me with a form to sign for my pay. That’s right, ladies; the department was paying me a modest amount for training in accordance with the joint agreement. On the ride home, I pondered the mechanics of setting up a trap that could expose the turncoats both in the sheriff’s department and the company without bringing about another battle. I hoped that Mr. Hennessy was receptive.

I think Sheriff Smallwood’s game worked exceptionally well but there appears to be an unknown party from without who aided his efforts. If Adam and John are real, their role was sabotaging the conspirators. How would they go about it? To start, the “secret payroll” they pried from Emmet Hamer gave them a roll of all Boss Griggs’ turncoats.

My ruse

Mr. Hennessy did not object to my unusual outing and considered the intelligence I derived from it valuable. He judged my investigative methods sound and the first time ever said that he considered me “a mature woman who was capable of making the appropriate decisions to achieve a satisfactory goal.” In other words, providing that my unorthodox techniques are not scandalous or place me in mortal peril, go ahead. That I assumed the guise of a prisoner and took a ride in the jail wagon to solve a case only enhances the reputation of the valiant crimefighting Levesque Sisters, a mythology he created to account for our very public, real-life, death-defying, and utterly mindless heroics. That said, it would make for a better newspaper story if my sleuthing directly contributed to the apprehension of those behind the slipshod plots to abduct Miss Waddell. Goodness!

Concerning my idea about setting a trap for the turncoats, the boss demurred. The possibility of inviting an armed assault upon a train or station is unacceptable. Uh-huh, I figured out a way around it.

“Sir, originally, you planned to have the evening express stop at the Eighth Street crossing for the hand off. Why the change?”

“Yes. The guards close both gates of Eighth Street a half-hour beforehand and afterwards to clear the way for the three arriving afternoon expresses, the evening mail trains, and three departing evening expresses. There is so much traffic passing over multiple tracks at the same time that anybody attempting to stop the transfer had too many obstacles to overcome: in addition to the gate guard, two watchmen, the upper yards patrol, and moving trains, the array of tracks between the passenger yard and Eighth Street offers no place to hide. I changed it to Haynes Town Station after Sheriff Smallwood told me that he was hiding Miss Waddell nearby

and considered bringing her to Port Unity too risky. It was only later did I learn that nearby meant the prison farm.”

“Obviously, Sheriff Smallwood has a turncoat in there who communicates with the plotters. That somebody told another party who told Mr. Houghton’s informant about the planned assault on the jail wagon is clear, but he said nothing about which train was taking Emma, nor anything about an unscheduled stop for the sheriff to see her safely onboard. Since the plotters might still believe Emma is in the county, I propose a special train like the one Mr. Creswell ordered up for financier Simon Parks using Number 435 and a baggage car. The best place where the sheriff can meet the train is at the Unity Bluff station where the great outer arc cuts through the bluff to the bridge. Through express trains transferring passengers stop there at night after Unity Station closes; other than that, freight train spot cars on the turnouts near the station. Accessible only by the dirt road extending from the lower yards, the location has all the qualities of your stop in the upper yards at Eighth Street plus more. The sheriff can position his deputies on both sides of the cut, through the bluff, and behind the freight cars.”

“That’s too good; ideal for another massacre and they’ll sense it. On the other hand, after failing at Sandyfield Cutoff, the ambushers, if they had the slightest hint of strategic intelligence, would mount their assault on the dirt road. The point of weakness is the quarter mile between the wharves of Houghton Metalworks and Unity Bluff Station. It has a dense stand of trees on the east side and west of the roadway, the descent to the river is steep: the best place to box in the sheriff’s car.”

“That’s right, but the sheriff’s men can encircle them nicely, too. Here is the part that’s sweet: the *faux* special train is not at the station. It’s all on paper in the Transportation Department and Mr. Skinner goes through the motions of firing up Number 435, but it only goes

to the first turnout above the upper yards beyond watchful eyes, or it might be a good opportunity to take it out on a run. I hear that he's made some improvements."

"Brilliant, Myrna, I'll discuss your plan with Sheriff Smallwood."

"Can I have a part in it?"

"No; continue your inquiry." Drats!

The little boat

We discussed several curious aspects of the attempts: Deputy Wilkes came to the rescue late during the first two, and he thwarted the third quite effectively; the mysterious Adam and John appeared out of nowhere with a boat during the second attempt; and Deputy Phales received the call from Cato's informant just in time to alter the plan to send Miss Waddell away with Liz despite the fact that Mr. Phales was the only person who knew that Sheriff Smallwood made changes.

"Sir, Sheriff Smallwood's plan was not dependent upon which day Liz was able to take Emma, nor did the telephone call from Cato's informant influence how he carried it through. The tattler merely confirmed when the assault would take place and where."

"I suspected as much: using the turncoat to trap the ambushers. Fine; it worked too well. Tell me more." My thoughts drifted back to Adam and John.

"The North Docks accommodate large vessels, not tiny boats. The 'detectives' could not appropriate one nearby. It is an easy task finding out whether somebody's fast little boat is missing, used without the owner's permission, or rented by two 'bruisers' driving a fancy touring car." Mr. Hennessy recommended that I check into the latter. It might provide us with the only proof that Adam and John are real. Deputy Phales' secondhand account from Emma is not

enough. At this point, I brought up my idea about speaking with Cato Houghton. No matter: Ella sent him tickets for tonight's performance of *The School for Scandal*. Oh, I want to see it! Mr. Hennessy was taking me, too; but I had to fix my hair properly atop my head so it wouldn't unwind and wear my finery along with my mother's jewels. Wonderful! Could I wear my glasses? Yes, but only during the play. Could I speak with Mr. Houghton? No, Ella is discreet. He wanted me to serve as a distraction for Sam Culver, gossips, and muckety-mucks.

My sister Ella established a very productive and risky collaboration with the present populist faction kingmaker Cato Houghton during the summer of 1917. While helpful to Sheriff Smallwood, he wanted to remain her secret source of intelligence on all the unsavory enterprises in the railroad district. Cato is a political rival of the sheriff; in business, he and real estate developer Sam Culver are longstanding adversaries. Mr. Culver also supports the reform faction which is in opposition to the populists. Granddaddy James backs the reformers. Uh-huh, she is walking a tightrope.

Ella and Cato

I enjoyed playing some gracious version of myself though it took me an hour to properly set my coils so they would stay up for the evening. Standing alongside Mr. Hennessy during the intermissions, the grande dames, muckety-mucks, and their hangers-on had to meet me. "My, you're so statuesque and beautiful in person! The photographs in the *Messenger* don't do you credit. Don't get me wrong. You look darling in that smart uniform, so stylish and modern! It's wonderful how you saved that young officer from the bullets and shielding that naughty lady with your body. The Levesque girls certainly did their duty on the home front! Do you have beaus?" Yes, plenty and some to spare. I am the Sweetheart of the Engineering Department.

“What attracted you to police work?” The handsome young officers! After they took me into custody, how could I resist? I didn’t say any of that but it’s true, except my type of work is drafting, making calculations, and repairing machines (like locomotives). “What do you plan to do now that all the men are coming back?” I simply smiled. All of them are not coming back. Mr. Culver stepped in just in time to save me from uttering something offensive in French. “Good evening, Miss Levesque. We’ve missed you at the theatre this last year. Professor Hennessy said you finished college this spring. Congratulations!” Professor? Well, it’s true but Chief Inspector is more impressive. “I look forward to seeing you at our next meeting of business at my hunting lodge.” Culver’s Lodge is a fabulous mansion decorated in a rustic style. The last person who did any hunting on the estate was his daddy, and he did more drinking than shooting. Jane Deschamps, Mr. Culver’s beautiful but reclusive stepsister is the only woman who participates in the “meeting of business” while the gentlemen’s wives and children enjoy the grounds and sundry entertainments. So, he is inviting me? Well, he invited Ella, too. Liz ought to come. Together, along with Granddaddy James, we represent five-eighths of the shares of the railroad – serving eighty percent of the local economy. Now, just how much are the shares worth these days? I have no idea. The value of the company’s physical assets is stupendous! We have to wait until the stockholders meeting in November to see the annual financial report. So, never mind. Where was Ella?

My sister disappeared at the beginning of the first intermission and did not descend the steps from the mezzanine until the final curtain. She spent most of the play sitting with that handsome old devil Cato Houghton. He is very charming, and much admired on the Northside. During the corrupt reign of Sheriff Dick Browning, Cato’s minions organized “committees of public safety” to combat crime in their neighborhoods. Browning’s deputies took bribes and looked the other

way; the committee meted out justice when the authorities failed to uphold the law without payment. While Cato never condones extralegal action, he maintains an army of informants within the entire county. He might be a genuine populist but first, a businessman.

“So, tell us what he said.”

“Mr. Houghton received his information from Clarence Yates indirectly through an informant and is a latecomer to the intrigues; however, he is certain two competing parties are involved, one being the Laine County bootleggers.” Who is Clarence Yates? “Cato was confused about the information he was receiving but had his informant pass on the details about the plot to abduct Miss Waddell to Sheriff Smallwood. The so-called ‘pirates’ are the same batch of outside hirelings who donned the disguise of ‘special constables’ to abduct Florence Phelps and several residents of the railroad district.” I think we must show the coroner’s photographs of those unidentified men to Florence. “Everybody wants Emma Waddell because Michael Shaw claimed that Arthur Mallet left behind something valuable that ended up in the hands of ‘The Lady’ for safekeeping.” Who is Michael Shaw? “The letter Emma delivered to Arthur is not what he led Miss Cowan to believe.” What? “The last time anybody saw Mr. Shaw, he entered the rear entrance of Whitaker & Blackwell Wholesale Hardware. His automobile stayed parked behind the building for three days, and then disappeared.” So, if we find his automobile abandoned in the woods- What make of automobile? “A Dodge Brothers *Model 30*.” I must get one! “Cato indulged in some speculation: he thought Shaw had Mallet killed; but after three failed attempts to abduct Emma with eleven men dead, somebody considered Shaw an unnecessary liability.” He thought the something valuable doesn’t exist or if it does, ‘The Lady’ has it. Goodness!

Upon arriving home, Ella confessed to slipping out of the theatre with Mr. Houghton for a stroll. Along the way, they sipped from his flask of quality brandy – last chance, sister – making

it back just before the curtain. Fortunately, at the theatre in Port Unity, the five-minute intermissions are fifteen and they occur within acts to encourage socializing. Good enough. I sense Ella and Cato are mutually charmed, a perilous move.

Despite the deluge of Mr. Houghton's perplexing assertions, I intended to continue my inquiry in a systematic fashion. Accompanying Deputy Phales to his meeting with Sheriff Jackson seemed more promising – Uh-huh, I'm the tagalong girl!

Mr. Parnell

Monday, Major Durant, and I accompanied Deputy Phales to his meeting with Sheriff Jackson. We took the mail train to Spring Garden, the Laine County seat, and waited in the courthouse for the arrival of Mr. Jackson. He was bringing Clyde Parnell, the manager of the salvage basin, a branch of the Hall Shipyard Company. They also own the abandoned boatyard north of the railroad bridge on the Northeast River. To get to Parnell's business we would have to drive on an unimproved dirt road for an hour or ride on the daily freight train that traversed the spur leading from Spring Garden to Wayne City. It follows the bends of the river and wouldn't complete its only run until late afternoon, leaving us stranded midway until the next day.

Upon viewing the photographs of the five bullet-riddled men, the sheriff recognized all of them. As Deputy Phales guessed, they were local "wasters" from the wooded environs fronting the river, all unskilled laborers who occasionally worked in the lumber mills and on the landings. Otherwise, they hunted, fished, and cut firewood for the moonshiners. All of them spent time in the county jail at least once, usually for brawling, drunkenness, and trespassing. Mr. Parnell called them "backwoods boys" who were good for a week's pay and then they returned to their shacks. He was more concerned about two of his best men who disappeared in April. They were

not among the scorched and shredded five who perished in the boiler explosion. Nevertheless, both knew how to navigate the bends and snags on the upper reaches of the Northeast River. Deputy Phales was curious about whether they were skilled in operating the steam tug.

When the Hall Boatyard closed in 1909, the recently refitted steam tug propped up with timbers in the yard behind the engine house remained. Previously, it saw service on the river towing barges and maneuvering the river steamboats into the drydock. Its hull was oak, and the engine was an antiquated wood burner. It was not up to the demands put upon the modern tugs at Port Unity. In 1918, with the war ongoing, the managers at the Hall Shipyard wanted it readied for use ferrying a barge from the South Docks to the spur at Unity Bluff. That never materialized. Even so, Mr. Parnell's men Horace Clayton and P.J. Groves took a crew to the old boatyard to launch the tug using skids and the disused stationary engine that once powered the site's workshop. With a little work, they were able to fire up the tugs boiler and bring it back upriver on its own power. The boiler was fine! After the war, Parnell planned on removing the engine, rebuilt it for coal burning, and use it to power a crane. Deputy Phales asked whether the explosion of its boiler would have blasted its hull to splinters. He didn't think so. At most, it would have destroyed the deck, leaving the hull intact. Since Clayton and Groves could operate and navigate the tug, Deputy Phales thought finding them was a priority, even if their remains were resting on the silty bottom of the river.

Mr. Parnell noted that the tug would have to take on wood somewhere between Sics Landing and Haugh Landing, if not earlier. Its builders never intended to have it travel far. Either somebody must cut the wood and stack it at a landing, or another vessel came alongside with the load. All the modern steam-powered boats on the river have coal-burning boilers.

On our return to Port Unity, Deputy Phales said that he found Sheriff Jackson's identification of the men encouraging. However, he didn't understand why it took a month for Mr. Parnell to report Clayton and Groves missing. He reported the theft of the tug immediately and wasted no time coming to Port Unity after learning that a vessel matching its description exploded off the Northside Docks. These men seemed like the prime suspects; either that, or the other men forced them to run the tug. Miss Waddell said there were five men onboard, not seven; Mr. Parnell could not identify any of them by their remains. Major Durant broke his silence.

"You established the identities of the five men who participated in the ambush. Sheriff Jackson and Mr. Parnell recognized all of them but could not do so with the previous five. That suggests that the conspirators recruited them from elsewhere. Without Clayton and Groves, they were able to run the tug and navigate the river. That is something the 'backwoods boys' couldn't do." Deputy Phales shook his head.

"How in the world could they find Emma running about looking for Lucy, much less identify her on sight?"

Our first discoveries

Adam and John are real; their Peerless is real! They rented the boat from Mr. Jimmy Clark, the supervisor of the Hall Shipyard, offering him one hundred dollars cash for the day and left their automobile as collateral. Clark would have sold it to them for a fraction of the rental. They were huge men, very polite, and sounded like New Englanders, "certainly affluent gentlemen." The duo used the boat for a few hours and returned with it after sunset. He didn't have a receipt for the transaction since the boat was his private property, and they returned it in good condition. The gentleman who introduced himself as Adam did all the talking. Mr. Clark recalled that they

rented the boat before the boiler on “Parnell’s old tug” burst. “They didn’t bring anything along, not even fishing poles, and neither looked properly dressed for an excursion.” I asked him about Horace Clayton and P.J. Groves. He didn’t know them. Thinking they worked in the Laine County salvage basin; he looked through the company employee records. Clayton and Groves repaired boilers at the Hall Boatyard from 1891 until it closed in 1909. What? He figured their present ages to be fifty-five and fifty-eight, respectively. Both were qualified to navigate steam powered vessels on the river, except those registered for passenger service, meaning in this case tugs and salvage craft. So, did Mr. Parnell lie to us? Mr. Clark thought not. He merely hired them for special jobs such as retrieving the neglected tug from the abandoned boatyard. Proving it meant finding the receipts for the cash payments. Later in the day, he telephoned Mr. Hennessy after retrieving the account records pertaining to the tug. Parnell paid Claton and Groves to launch it in the water at the old boatyard, make the engine operational, and navigate it upriver to the salvage basin. He then paid them to completely restore it for use transporting a barge between the shipyard and the landing at Unity Bluff. The purpose was transporting salvaged metal to Houghton Metalworks & Scrap. The shipyard abandoned the plan when they decided it was cheaper to hire one of the tugs working the South Docks. That’s all that Mr. Clark could find on Claton and Groves. He didn’t have an address for either. So, that was an easy day of sleuthing. Why hadn’t Sheriff Smallwood and his deputies spoken with Mr. Clark? Well, they dismissed the men in the Peerless as railroad district lore and Deputy Wilkes called them “strangers in a boat” in his statement, yet I think the sheriff is hiding something, or he doesn’t want to give life to a useful myth. If Deputy Phales didn’t believe Emma’s story, I would think the same.

We decided to revisit the abduction attempts. On Thursday, March 27, 1919, an unknown drifter attempted to abduct Emma Waddell at gunpoint. Picture this: it was five o'clock in the afternoon; he waited outside the entrance to the freight office; other employees left work at the same time, and North First Avenue was busy, many witnesses, including those who would notice him waiting; she surprised him with her pistol, and Deputy Wilkes chased him to Rose Street; he ran down the alleyway behind the hotel and that's it. Chester Wilkes happened to be there because that was his assignment: see Emma to work and back. Why? Other than a bad-tempered encounter with Cato Houghton over the price he was offering Lavinia for her house, Sheriff Smallwood has yet to explain why she needed an escort for two blocks in broad daylight on a busy street. Nevertheless, the drifter needed to recognize Emma when she stepped out, so somebody was helping him.

Our narratives of the attack of the "pirates" on Tuesday, April 18 have inconsistencies. Once again, Deputy Wilkes escorted her home from work at five o'clock. Lucy ran out the back door, Emma followed, Deputy Wilkes was on the front porch. Adam and John were where? Station officers found Lucy on the concourse around six o'clock. An unknown crew docked the tug at the base of Rose near the railroad's wharves. Emma's "boys" met Wilkes halfway on Mulberry between North First and River Street. The tug blew up around seven o'clock. Uh-huh, something is wrong. Jimmy Clark said Adam Smith and his brother John rented his boat before five; and they left their Peerless. It is a mile from the company wharves to the beginning of the South Docks, and the Hall Shipyard is three-quarters of a mile further. Their boat must have been nearby, say, north of the company wharves. Also, I'm not sure about how long it takes to build up a head of steam for 1850s wood-burning boilers powering boat engines, but there's not enough time in this scenario without steam. The crew didn't abandon it cold. Nobody was tending it so

pressure dropped, but it wouldn't take much time to build it up. From the Hall house to the station is a straight line for two blocks. Adam and John were going to the Hall house up Mulberry and Deputy Wilkes was heading toward them, perpendicular to the direction Lucy and Emma were running? Everything is wrong! Sheriff Smallwood's report is second hand, not figuring in the statement of Jimmy Clark, time, distance, direction, and thermodynamics, but it is dramatic.

Analyzing the ambush at Sandyfield Cutoff was unnecessary. In addition to visiting the site, Deputy Phales gave me a complete tour of the "battleground" along with his comprehensive account of the engagement.

Mr. Hennessy thought we needed to recalibrate the other narratives to physical reality. The first abduction attempt required reconnaissance, practice, and rapid implementation. The culprit needed to come up quickly, place a gun in her back, preventing her from making a risky move. If done smoothly, she would have little choice but go with him. He hesitated, approached from the side, and didn't anticipate facing her pistol, nor that Deputy Wilkes was stalking him. We decided to carry our analysis outside to the nearby environs of these events. For the first attempt, Mr. Hennessy assumed the role of the abductor and I, Emma. He discovered the best position to wait for me was the shelter at the trolley stop outside the entrance of Unity Station. If done correctly, he could stroll on the sidewalk from the trolley stop to the doorway of the freight office, placing an imaginary gun in the small of my back as I turned to walk south toward the Hall house. Learning her routines meant the culprit knew Deputy Wilkes was meeting her so having an accomplice with an automobile at the ready was essential to the success of the plot. On foot, the deputy would confront the man, either prompting him to run or use Emma as a hostage.

The attempt failed not because Emma had a pistol in her bag, but she saw the culprit in time to retrieve it meaning he approached her from the side not behind.

As told, the attack of the “pirates” is an ill-planned debacle, yet when we adjusted for time and distance, it was an elegant example of competing maneuvers. If the raiding party didn’t come on the tug, they made the journey by automobile or train. The afternoon expresses and way trains arrive at three o’clock. Bringing professional criminals from distant parts seemed more plausible by means of the latter. Like the lone drifter or hired outsider, they needed local accomplices to assist them in the assault upon the Hall house. The best approach was through the back entrance. Deputy Wilkes brought Emma to the front. A six-foot-high brick wall surrounds the back yard with the rear gate opening onto Second Street. Considering this, Lucy could only get to the station by leaving through the gate and continuing two blocks on Second, passing behind the Magic Lantern and the Railroad Hotel to Rose. The cleared blocks where the cotton works once stood are on the opposite side. With the exception of vendors providing services to the hotel, few use the street. The men caught Emma leaving this way, saving them the trouble of assailing the house. Mr. Hennessy thought Adam and John planned to seize the tug but mounting a defense at the Hall house was better: the walled in backyard was a trap when the rear windows on the second floor serve as shooting positions and Lavinia’s double-barrel would prove handy if somebody made it through the door. After paying a visit to Mrs. Hall’s house, which also included obligatory tea and butter cookies, he concluded that Deputy Wilkes alone could mount an effective defense long enough to receive assistance from his colleagues a block away. Overall, the plot seemed ludicrous. It was entirely contingent upon surprise: a violent housebreaking in broad daylight during the busiest afternoon hours. On the other hand, it was audacious, and could

have worked if the culprits achieved surprise. We'll never know. Lucy upset the timetable for all parties.

With Emma taken, cutting off the route of escape was their next strategy when the gasoline powered boat is reintroduced into the scenario. Yet, if Adam and John disposed of the tug's crew before setting out to thwart the assault, where are their bodies? The explosives are another problem. Though Adam and John could use explosives, it wasn't to their advantage. Somebody wanted to remove everything, the crew, the hired help, the tug, and Emma, or things didn't go as planned. Sheriff Smallwood's "official report" is short on details. We needed Deputy Wilkes account to fill the gaps.

In the afternoon, I strode unaccompanied through the bustle on North First, passing the familiar haunts of the Friday throngs: the Railroad Hotel Dining Hall, the Magic Lantern, Cram's Sandwich Shop, and the Walnut Café. At Mulberry, I turned the corner at the Hall Mansion. Crazy Lucy waved from the downstairs window. Immediately, the cleared block where the several massive buildings of the Cowan Cotton & Fabric Company once stood captured my attention. The block adjoining it behind the Railroad Hotel once contained the warehouses. Everything was gone. From the belvedere of our house on Fifth, I studied this void in the neighborhood through the telescope. It is more startling and bleaker at ground level. One block further on Mulberry was the old store that the deputies used as their auxiliary station. This is where Chester Wilkes was meeting me. Upon entering, a puzzled prim lady in a white uniform asked whether I lost my way. "No, this is the right place. I'm here to see Deputy Wilkes." She cleared her throat, and then pointed over her shoulder. His office was in the rear of the long, open room.

“Good afternoon, sir. Remember me?”

“Myrna Levesque! How could I forget? Sheriff Bert said Chief Inspector Hennessy was sending you over. What does he need to know?”

“May I ask you a few questions about the pirates?”

“Pirates? Bumpers is more like it. Since Emma is safe, I can tell you the whole of it. That is, providing the full story doesn’t become public, particularly the craziness – Florence Phelps, Sam Culver’s private detectives, Lucy. It wouldn’t help one bit! So, ask away.”

“Why did the sheriff have you see Emma to and from work back in March?”

“Two men in a fancy touring car started following her. Folks in the railroad district reported seeing it repeatedly for years, always at night. Sheriff Bert posted deputies in the neighborhood a few times. They saw nothing. You might think it was more neighborhood silliness like Demon Pete, but I knew it wasn’t something otherworldly because- Can I trust you not to make a stink about this?”

“Certainly!”

“I drove it a few times. The fellows who owned it were Sam Culver’s private detectives, Clarence Yates, and Ruppert Kline. They joined up in Europe before we entered the war, leaving their Peerless in Florence Phelps’ barn, and said she could use it.” Now, we’re getting somewhere! According to Chester, Yates and Kline had experience in performing covert assignments behind enemy lines and his “acquaintances” from the South Docks saw the Peerless frequently visiting the neighborhood. No doubt Yates and Kline knew about Mr. Clark’s boat in advance of renting it, implying that they also obtained details of their adversary’s plan.

Wonderful! “For a while, I helped Florence search for the place where the kidnappers took her. She thinks they handed her over to the bootleggers but no telling. Sheriff Bert gave up on it

because no houses near the river have cellars. The men had her sedated with something, I guess laudanum, so he suspected it was the cellar of a house in town. I think it was on the river, not a cellar, a small structure without windows like a storeroom. There's one at the closed Independence Ice Factory and a cluster of empty brick buildings at the abandoned Hall Boatyard, both properties owned by Lavinia Hall and Jane Deschamps. I liked Florence, but we parted ways, that, or I would have no choice but arrest her. Without going into specifics, she's dangerous. Getting back to Emma, Sheriff Bert refused to hear anything about the Peerless, but he thought after she had a run-in with Cato, his men were following her. He gave me the assignment since it was close to the deputy station where I work. So, morning and evening, I saw her to work and back."

"Did you ever notice anybody watching you?"

"How could I tell? North First during business hours is constantly in motion and busting at the seams. Do you want to hear the rest?"

"I sure do!"

"That fellow who tried to take Emma must have had a partner. There was enough time to get her into an automobile before I was close enough to stop him. What saved Emma was the 'lady pistol' in her bag."

"She saw him first. That makes sense: if he came up on her from behind, she couldn't get to that pistol soon enough."

"Our girl put up a fuss, too: screaming, cussing, yelling for help. Everybody within earshot stopped. You know the rest, so I'll go to our next scrape. A month later, I brought her home after work. Before going inside, Emma told me to wait a moment on the porch before heading back to

the station. She brought out a plate with two fried chicken legs, a piece of hot cornbread, a glass of iced tea, and a linen napkin.”

“I must invite you over when Ella and I are cooking fried chicken.”

“Anytime! I sat down in a porch chair and had a little feast. About the time I finished the tea, a giant man in a dapper suit called out to me from the sidewalk. ‘Say, how do you like our Peerless? Doesn’t she drive sweet?’ I gave him a dirty look. ‘What’s the idea following our girl?’ He said, ‘Protecting her, just like right now. They’re coming this way to break-in and take her.’ Oh, hell! ‘What are you talking about?’ He grumbled ‘The same hired hoods who took Florence, that’s who!’ Before I could say another word, Mrs. Hall came out upset about Lucy getting out the backdoor. Myrna when after her. I told her to get her double-barrel and bolt the doors. ‘Any ideas, deputy? I was planning to help you defend the castle. Who’s this Lucy? A pooch? Never mind; it’s broad daylight, so I think they’re coming by way of the street running behind the hotel. If they’re not inside the gate now, we can stop them there. My brother is waiting for them at their boat.’ When we turned the corner on Second, we saw five men strolling along with Emma approaching the turn onto Rose. ‘That’s them! They have her, so there’s nothing to defend here.’ We dashed across the Magic Lantern lot to North Front and cut down to River Street. His partner met us, a big fellow with a limp. He said the men took Emma onto the tug, so he couldn’t do anything about it. The ‘captain’ and his ‘stoker’ took off running toward the South Docks about the time he arrived with the little motorized boat.”

“So, Ruppert Kline, the man with the limb, dropped off Clarence Yates, the giant in the dapper suit, at the pier at the bottom of Mulberry, and then continued to Whitaker’s dock, adjoining the company wharves.”

“He brought the boat under the railroad wharves. The ‘crew’ tied off the tug at the old cotton works’ pier.”

“Then, they took off running.”

“Yes, it was minutes after they tied off. The fools arrived soon thereafter, cast off, but they didn’t have enough steam to get her going. I told the foreman of the lower yards to telephone the harbor patrol. They must stop that tug from going upriver. I am only speculating, but I imagine running a steam engine is more involved than stoking the fire and waiting for something to move.”

“Yes! When you have a free afternoon, I would be delighted to show you.”

“They were drifting on the current in the middle of the river, black smoke pouring out of the smokestack, and it’s wheels weren’t moving.”

“A sidewheeler – ha-ha-ha! So, Mr. Parnell thought he could use an antique crosshead engine to power a crane? Tommyrot! That rascal was keeping the tug for something else, say, running moonshine. We’ll never know.”

“That girl wasn’t saying anything! Fed up with her sharp tongue, they left her tied up. She started working some slack into her cords. Two of the brutes tossed a sack over the side attached to a rope. I couldn’t figure out what they were doing. They had Emma inside, torturing her into talking. That’s a scary situation! The water pushes the sack in around you until it fills, but the air is gone. Now was the time for that girl to slip her cords and force her hand through the tied-off end of the sack. Its knot slipped off. She was out! Emma can swim like a champion! Those fellows started to turn and couldn’t handle it. The paddle wheels move forward, back, forward, and froze. Adam and John, as Emma calls them, came sweeping behind the tug with their gasoline motor. It was a wide arc to get around to Emma. The bow of the tug pointed toward the

ship tied off at the railroad wharves but the whole thing was drifting toward me. The fools were coming within range. I had my revolver ready to pick off the two on deck. That would even things: three to three. Well, the Peerless boys could take on all five without firing a shot. They're professional soldiers and big. The explosion was ear shattering; the wake from the blast about capsized that little boat; wood and metal came raining down but most of it on both banks of the river – that's blasting out! Some of it came my way. Emma dived under. Yates and Kline pulled her into their boat and brought her to me. I took her directly to Lavinia and called Sheriff Smallwood. He told me to stay put until he arrived and then go back for a chat with the Harbor Patrol. You know the rest."

"So, Chester, the time from which Adam, rather Mr. Yates, showed up at Lavinia's house until the explosion was about an hour."

"Let's see. I guess it was. Emma was off work at five, we walked two blocks to the house, I had my fried chicken and hot cornbread: twenty-of sounds more like it but after that, we jumped into action. Despite what Sheriff Bert wrote, he stretched out time, we didn't search long for Emma because there she was! Dash one block north, two blocks west, and then another block north: four blocks total. Missing a toe didn't prevent me from keeping up with the big fellow. The fools, I'm not calling them pirates, walked the same distance by Second to Rose to the North Docks but had a one-block head start. When we made it to the river, everything happened fast, too, alarmingly fast! I took Emma home. We were a mess! The folks who supplied the tug wanted everybody gone, including our Emma. I tell you; the 'captain' rigged that tug to blow! That's all there is."

"Assuming that is true, there are at least two parties with competing interest: one wanting Emma to reveal her secret; the other trying to prevent her from doing so."

“I’m inclined to think that Emma was bait from the start. Somebody local is giving the amateurs directions to the traps. You suggested Mr. Parnell kept the old tug to transport moonshine for the Laine County bootleggers. Now, he doesn’t have it. Still, there must be something much worse at the root of all this.”

Though Chester Wilkes and Tom Phales brought clarity to the narrative, piecing together accurate details of the abduction attempts was irksome after our collaboration brought to the fore the enigmatic Clarence Yates and Ruppert Kline. I found Mr. Yates’ revelation that the “pirates” were the same men who abducted Florence and likely numerous others especially discouraging. If they were those killed in the tug explosion, it might be difficult if not impossible to expose who hired them. I still have yet to tease out clues from Florence’s statement that would lead us to where the “special constables” held her. Nevertheless, in 1914, Chester eliminated some sites from the list by exploring the long-abandoned Haynes and Sics plantations, the surrounding woodlands, and the neglected landings. All these occupy a stretch of three miles downriver from Haynes Town. What hasn’t received serious scrutiny is the two miles upriver between the railroad bridge and the abandoned Hall Boatyard. There are some credible reports including Chester’s observations that Laine County bootleggers unload crates of moonshine at Sics Landing. Florence claimed that Lester Whitaker’s Northeast River Navigation Company uses the boatyard wharf for that purpose, but Sheriff Smallwood discovered they were distributing baskets of produce to the residents of this sparsely inhabited area. I’m still hoping that the sheriff might persuade Lavinia Hall and Jane Deschamps to allow us to examine the site with all its buildings. Hitherto, the Hall Shipyard Company attorney has imposed unreasonable conditions for an unofficial visit. Ironically, hunters frequently make camp there and vessels plying the river tie off at the wharf overnight without permission. That said, Mr. Buchanan was satisfied with my initial report but doubted whether I could progress further with my inquiry.

Lydia's drawing

I thought having a discreet conversation with Mr. Culver was past due.

“Sheriff Smallwood couldn’t find Yates and Kline when residents of the railroad district saw them regularly. Since Sam Culver employed the two it follows that he should be able to contact them.” Mr. Buchanan inhaled deeply and then cleared his throat.

“That’s sticky, Myrna. Where do you start?”

“I start by walking down the hall to my grandfather’s office and ask him to telephone Mr. Culver. After they exchange niceties, I intend to speak with him about Clarence Yates and Ruppert Kline: how we can find them, their discoveries, why they collaborated with Mr. Houghton, whether he hired them to protect Miss Waddell, and so forth. I am confident that the gentleman will be candid. He is clever enough not to incriminate himself, but prudent enough to stay on good terms with the Levesque family.” Mr. Hennessy displayed a satisfied grin and savored Mr. Buchanan’s pained expression.

I had a pleasant chat with the charming Sam Culver. Clarence Yates and Ruppert Kline are college classmates, sons of privilege, who occasionally worked for the Boston office of Alan Deschamps & Company as freelance investigators. The Peerless belongs to Mr. Kline. It’s his second! Sam originally employed them to discover which owners of properties in the railroad district were willing to sell and whether Mr. Houghton had made them an offer. After the abduction of Florence Phelps following her improper incarceration by Sheriff Browning, he assigned Yates and Kline to protect her. They trained her hired hands to repel future abduction attempts. Mr. Culver paid them for their services and Florence allowed them to stay at her farm. They continued their employment until 1916, which at that time they decided to join the war. He did not know for what country but certainly with our eventual allies. Both sustained battle wounds and returned in the late summer of 1918. They went to the Phelps farm for the Peerless. At the time, Mr. Culver and Mr. Cowan came to an agreement concerning the sale of the cotton works. Its equipment was wearing out after constant use, and he acquired a facility more conveniently located to supply cotton to his mills. This was about a month before Mr. Mallet announced the closing of

the Port Unity works. After the labor unrest, Mr. Culver assigned Yates and Kline to assist Gilbert Lawson, Mr. Cowan's company detective. It was then that Michael Shaw paid a visit to Mr. Mallet at his office. They had a prolonged argument over some past business deal. Shortly thereafter, several suspicious men started haunting the environs of the cotton works. Mr. Kline followed them to the Mariners' Groggery. Shaw's hires were sailors and longshoremen, none with experience in surveillance, some lasting only a few days on the job. During the week of the Armistice, Mr. Shaw lost his temper with the woman sketch artist who sits in the Walnut Café drawing patrons' portraits. That's Lydia Rochelle! He snatched away her drawing and ripped it to shreds. A few days later, he attempted to drag a woman into his car behind Lavinia Hall's house, across from the gate of the cotton works. Mr. Mallet came to her aid, disregarding Lawson's instructions to wait for his men to escort him to the Southside Hotel, his residence after early morning visitors vandalized his Commerce Street home. During the brawl, Shaw pulled a revolver, punched Mr. Mallet in the stomach, and then promised to settle scores later. He drove off. Lawson's men arrived to assist Mr. Mallet. They tried to persuade him to file a report with the sheriff, but he refused.

After Mr. Culver acquired the cotton works property in late December, he no longer needed the services of Yates and Kline. For a while, they worked for Jane, who wanted them to investigate the disappearance of Arthur Mallet after the sheriff abandoned his investigation in early February. She was friends with Arthur but rejected his proposal of marriage because she was raising young Miles. At some point, Clarence Yates decided protecting Emma was more important. They were on their own.

Mr. Culver had no idea that Yates and Kline cross lines into Mr. Houghton's camp, but he sensed they returned from the war changed. From early March onward, they were on a personal crusade. Sam and Jane heard no more from them, nor do they know their whereabouts. They have yet to return to the Boston office and he didn't expect they would. Toward the end of our conversation, Mr. Culver remarked that Yates and Kline had the skills to gather intelligence behind enemy lines, sabotage their equipment, disrupt communications, and handle explosives. In closing, he said Clarence uncovered something

disturbing about Arthur to cause him to end their work for Jane. He refused to tell her the particulars, but it has something to do with a business in Charleston.

When I reported the alarming particulars of my conversation to Mr. Buchanan, he was speechless. Mr. Hennessy took charge.

“Lydia is across the street working. Let’s speak with her.” If you don’t recall, the company frequently employs Lydia to make illustrations for publications, and several of her delightful watercolors grace the walls of the station restaurant. In addition, Mr. Hennessy occasionally employs her when witnesses described the appearance of a suspected wrongdoer. She lives in a small room on the fourth floor of the original wing of the Railroad Hotel and works in the kitchen of its dining hall.

Upon entering the hotel, Mr. Hennessy asked the manager whether we could speak with Miss Rochelle. He told us she had twenty minutes remaining before her break, but we could take a seat and have our lunch in the dining hall while waiting. Their roast beef special was on the day’s menu, so I persuaded the boss to try it. Fabulous! When Miss Rochelle came out to join us, she was all smiles. After we asked her about the man who ripped up her drawing she became extremely upset, more accurately, fearful. Michael Shaw attempted to abduct Lydia at gunpoint several days following his tantrum over her drawing his picture without asking permission. She resisted after he ordered her to get into his automobile. That’s when Arthur Mallet rushed to her defense. She escaped, running back to the safety of the Railroad Hotel. Having drawn her assailant’s face before, Lydia redrew it from memory, a skill she refined because capturing a moment in time is her style. Since November she had not ventured outside the hotel for fear of “Demon Pete snatching her.” We assured her Michael Shaw was not Demon Pete and the sheriff wanted to bring him in for questioning. So, was Lydia willing to speak with Sheriff Smallwood? If we brought him by after her shift ended at five, she was willing to show him her drawing. We would be there, too. Mr. Hennessy then asked her to fetch her sketch book so we could photograph her drawing, promising to safeguard it until we returned at five o’clock.

The drawing of Michael Shaw was rich in detail, a quality typical for all Miss Rochelle's work. It also included a note at the bottom of the sheet describing him and a narrative of his crime. If she went missing, Lydia wanted somebody to give it to Mr. Hennessy. The image of the man before us was that of an ordinary-looking middle-aged man with a receding hairline having hints of gray. He is average height and stocky. The only unusual feature of his face was puffy cheeks and a tiny "cherub" mouth. After taking Lydia's statement he persuaded her to press charges for assault and attempted kidnapping. Ah-ha, now his investigation lurched forward!

Thursday morning's Messenger placed Lydia's drawing on the front page along with the headline "Wanted for Assault and Attempted Kidnapping." The accompanying article stated that Sheriff Smallwood obtained an arrest warrant for the "unidentified man" for those crimes, and he wanted to question him about other unsolved cases including the disappearance of Arthur Mallet, the sinking of a tug belonging to Hall Shipbuilding Company, and the armed ambush of deputies at Sandyfield Cutoff.

Mr. Hennessy decided to light a fire under Alfred Cowan. Along with mailing a copy of the newspaper article, he included a letter stating that Mr. Culver's private detectives reported that his employee Gilbert Lawson identified the wanted man as Michael Shaw, a former business partner of Arthur Mallet. Shaw also faces charges for his participation in attempting to kidnap a railroad employee on company property (actually, a few feet of company property outside the freight office, ha-ha-ha), and the chief attorney of the company would appreciate Mr. Lawson's cooperation in the investigation without obtaining it through the courts. With the letter, Mr. Hennessy included a photograph of Lydia's drawing. Mr. Buchanan muttered "You're determined to pry this open, Roscoe. Tell me what I'm missing." Mr. Hennessy removed a large bound volume from his desk. Several pieces of newspaper marked pages.

"The company archives keep the old city directories. This one is from 1906-07. On this page, we have Michael Shaw, Manager of Consolidated Cotton Brokers; residence, 515 Commerce Street; and in the advertisement section, we find his name; also, from the files of the *Messenger*, I found two articles the paper ran on him. They keep clippings organized by name, business, and event. Careful, I promised to

return them. This one features his photograph. He is a gaunt old man, bald, with a wide mustache, thin nose, and pointed chin. That is not the same man in Lydia's drawing, well, it couldn't be. Here is his obituary from 1912: 'Michael William Shaw, age seventy-two, passed away peacefully at his old family home situated on the Chesapeake. Mr. Shaw was manager of Consolidated Cotton Brokers from its opening in 1889 until Cowan Cotton & Fabric acquired the works in 1909,' and so forth. Somebody is lying to us." Mr. Buchanan carefully studied the articles and then shook his head. I cast my eyes upward to the ceiling trying to avoid interjecting "Lawson."

"Both Sam Culver and Cato Houghton said Mr. Yates said Gilbert Lawson identified Michael Shaw as Arthur Mallet's old enemy. So, Roscoe, who is the liar, Yates, or Lawson?"

"We have two second-hand accounts of what Mr. Yates said and each includes contradictions. Let see whether these details are verifiable. Myrna are you up to an afternoon of being a pest?"

"Yes, sir; you can count on me!"

"Good. Bring along your satchel and sidearm; tell the Major to take his revolver, oh, and don't forget a photograph of Lydia's drawing. Assume a dignified and serious demeanor. None of your innate silliness. Pay a visit to Emmet Hamer, Whitaker & Blackwell Wholesale Hardware, and lastly, the Mariners' Groggery. Ask about Shaw but drop something to set them on edge."

We started by visiting Emmet Hamer's warehouse. He had a variety of wonderful merchandise for sale at bargain prices! After letting us sample some quality cheese he acquired, the Major and I bought a wheel of it to split. He told us the drawing was not the Michael Shaw he knew. "That gentleman died years ago." The man Lydia drew introduced himself as Hiram Grady. That might be another alias, too. He was from out-of-state but didn't say where. I started out by asking how he met the man in the drawing. Mr. Hamer corrected us. There was no meeting. Grady came down upon him like a collapsing ceiling, making ridiculous demands, shoving money in his face, expecting to hire a band of thugs to help him even a score. Hamer told him to take his business elsewhere. The workers he hired out were day laborers and handymen. He threw a fit, eventually venting his rage on Lydia for drawing his picture without permission. After ripping up her sketch, he stormed out. Everybody in the Walnut Café witnessed the

scene. He never saw the man again. The whole affair transpired like a summer thunderstorm, coming on unexpectedly with a terrific display and clearing out after a brief downpour. He had nothing further to add. Once again, the retelling of familiar stories includes new significant details.

Our visit to the Mariners' Groggery was a curious experience – ha-ha-ha! I was the first lady ever to set foot in that establishment but having the Major in tow dampened the mood. The bartender recognized the man in the drawing as Hiram Grady, “a big talker who employed a half-dozen men for a week to do nothing.” One was sitting at a table sipping beer. Major Durant ordered him another bottle – get it while you can. Our new acquaintance said, “the pudgy hothead hired us to watch the cotton works and report back anything happening.” This was during late October. It was after the labor rebellion so armed men were patrolling inside the gate. There wasn't much to see; they didn't know what to look for; and after of week watching conspicuously around the plant, their employer paid up and that was the last time anybody saw him. A longshoreman who nobody knew showed up around that time, stopped coming, and came back in the spring. He was very muscular and had a limp. About the same time, he noticed a fancy touring car driving through the South Docks. Other men noticed it and then they didn't. After that, the strange longshoreman stopped dropping in for his solitary drink for good. Other strangers showed up during the same time. Since sailors and longshoremen patronize the establishment, everybody notices strangers. I asked whether he knew Horace Clayton and P.J. Groves. He didn't. Nobody we spoke to knew them.

At Whitaker & Blackwell Wholesale Hardware everybody recognized our man in the drawing. He was the salesman from Charleston who rented the room above the store when he came to town on business. They had five-day rent receipts for him signed Hiram Grady, the earliest, October 19, 1918, the last, May 12, 1919. He drove a Dodge Brothers Model 30. As for Clayton and Groves, Mr. Blackwell knew of them because they worked for Mr. Parnell. The shop at the salvage basin is where Mr. Whitaker has his steamboat repaired. Good enough. We just spent the afternoon verifying the mundane facts common to several discoveries, altogether unremarkable. That Michael Shaw is Hiram Grady doesn't mean anything. He might go by many names. I wonder whether our suspect also worked in cotton and textiles. That he drove from Charleston rather than come by train was curious.

The next day, Mr. Hennessy and I began by sorting through our hodge-podge of sundry verifiable facts: the man calling himself Hiram Grady assaulted and attempted to kidnap Lydia Rochelle; he rented a room over Whitaker & Blackwell Wholesale Hardware; he drove a Dodge Brothers *Model 30*; he attempted to hire thugs from Emmet Hamer to settle a score; he hired longshoremen at the Mariners' Groggery to surveil the cotton works; and he pulled a revolver on Arthur Mallet. Thus far, we assembled a body of first-hand accounts useful for the prosecution of Hiram Grady for crimes perpetrated against Lydia Rochelle and Arthur Mallet, a gift for Sheriff Smallwood. Nothing connected Grady to the failed attempts to abduct Emma Waddell.

In the afternoon, we had a meeting with Sheriff Smallwood for the purpose of sharing our findings. During the discussion, he admitted to revising his file on the Arthur Mallet disappearance case after Lydia provided her statement. It contains the letters that Annie Cowan brought to the editor of the *Messenger*. Mr. Mallet's first letter to her predates his announcement of the sale of the cotton works, the labor unrest, the vandalizing of his home, the first verified visit of Hiram Grady, and the arrival of Gilbert Lawson. The second letter describing his encounter with an adversary from the past was postmarked Thursday, November 14, 1918, the day following his brawl. That Lawson withheld his statement during the investigation puzzled Mr. Hennessy. Had third parties not transmitted fragments of his observations we would not know about Michael Shaw. Also, we wondered why Grady continued to visit Port Unity months after Mallet vanished and Sam had the cotton works demolished.

Mr. Hennessy proposed that we consider the various incidents separate until there is a clear connection. Though the sheriff might have a persuasive case against Hiram Grady for assaulting Lydia Rochelle, anything more is speculation. Annie Cowan's unhelpful letters lead nowhere, and even if Mr. Mallet named the conspirators, she doesn't have the original that Emma delivered to him. Yet, even if it survived, claiming certain individuals are participating in a conspiracy is not enough. It appears that finding out the whereabouts of Mallet or something in his possession, not the identity of the letter-writing friend of a friend motivated the attempts to abduct Miss Waddell. The second was particularly disconcerting because somebody sabotaged it. Additionally, her adventures with Yates and Kline,

sleuthing with Florence Phelps, and even her safe job eavesdropping in the hall of the jail presented risks. We might be following the wrong path. Sheriff Smallwood thought the time had come to interview Florence. He recommended that Deputy Phales and I drive out to her farm.

When we spoke with Mr. Phales, he reported having received several complaints from women claiming the drawing of Grady was Demon Pete. Each stated that the man attempted to force them into his automobile. The incidents spanned a range of several years. All said that they met him in one of the North First establishments. He seemed nice at first but became aggressive over time. A few days later, he attempted to abduct them off the street. Mr. Phales persuaded the women to give their statements. We were too quick to dismiss Lydia's assumption that Grady was a Demon Pete.

Emma's notebooks

Liz is back. Of the usual cast of characters visiting the "Levesque Asylum," she is the only one who descends the steps to the basement doors on the street side of the house first to see whether I am in my workshop. This entrance is well lit, has granite steps, and wide double doors for bringing in ungainly items. A pull chain rings a bell inside to let us know somebody is making a delivery. A goodly portion of the rear half of the basement contains the household machinery for heating, plumbing, and the electrics. Some of the large rooms in this section contain maintenance supplies. The front half of the basement consists of several large rooms with closets all connected by a central hallway. The door to this section is guarded by the terrifying *papier-mâché* gargoyle the McNair boys and I made as teenagers. Mrs. Keane calls it a "graven image" of a Snallygaster. Ella installed three-bolt mortise locks on our basement doors so she and the household staff cannot stop in to sightsee and plunder. Like all the basement rooms, this section has bare brick walls and exposed ceiling beams. I use most of this space for our workshop and storage for lumber, metal, and hardware. Ella has a prop room for storing everything for our magic routines. What brings Liz to "the girls' playroom" is feminine camaraderie, unbecoming behavior, and relief from the oppressive heat. Her visit this evening concerned our inquiry.

“I had Emma write several long narratives describing all of her recent misadventures. This much I can say: Emma was doing fine until she began helping Florence.”

First off, Miss Buchanan, I want to clear up one thing: I only met Mr. Arthur Mallet face-to-face once; not before, not after, just one time; long enough for me to give him a letter from Florence Phelps. I didn't know what it was about; it wasn't any business of mine, so I didn't ask. He wrote a letter to Miss Annie Cowan saying a "lady from the railroad" gave him a letter that saved his life, and she showed it to the editor of the *Messenger* newspaper. The girls in the freight office knew it was me, because I told Myrtle – she can't keep a secret – and soon enough everybody knows it was me. That's all true; it doesn't mean I knew what it was all about. That could have been a love letter. It's no secret that she was engaged to Mr. Mallet way back. Why is it that the crooks want to snatch me, and not Florence. She doesn't know what was in the letter, but her friend she doesn't want to name wrote the thing. Where is this letter anyway? That Miss Cowan has all these letters from her fellow, but not this particular one? Well, it caused me all this trouble. Yes, it sure did! There are other things that I know, but none have anything to do with Mr. Arthur Mallet. So, there! The rest? Since you're still curious, I'll put it all down in this notebook.

“Emma described several occasions of ‘snooping’ where Florence takes extraordinary risks. She was convinced that they saw bootleggers bringing a load of Laine County moonshine downriver in Lester Whitaker’s steamboat but that turned out not to be the case.”

In 1918, it was Friday to Saturday, every other week that summer. We went tromping from Haynes Town to the railroad bridge; and from there, kept following the river. The bugs ate us up! That Florence didn't let up for a minute! There was something burning inside her! All along, we saw the smoke from a certain steamboat, but it wasn't until we took the mail train from Haynes to Northeast Depot on the other side of the bridge that it came into full view. There is an unobstructed overlook

after following the tracks back to the abutment of the bridge. Talk about foolishness: that girl climbed up on one of the trusses! I was scared for her way up there hanging on. It was a wait, too; but after watching all those times, we knew the captain would make his way downriver Friday before sundown. Sure enough, Florence spotted him coming from way up yonder. The smoke stopped about two miles upriver. On both sides, there were lots of little nooks next to the water's edge to hide that boat. Well, she saw smoke coming from the other direction, too, and coming from no boat! She shimmied on down that crosspiece right fast, and ran, making it off that bridge just as the express train came on. That girl is going to get herself killed! Florence did a lot of exploring when I wasn't around, so she narrowed things down to one place, the old boatyard. The road to get there was impassable, but she found a footpath leading down to the wharves where the big steamboats in the old days used to tie up. When I arrived the following week, she was ready to take me snooping. So as to not attract attention, we both wore dark blouses. Hopefully, we could look around before the steamboat came along. Just in case, both of us were carrying our lady pistols. It wasn't any trouble getting down there, but when we started going around to those old brick buildings, we found every last one of them padlocked. Soon enough, we saw smoke from that steamboat. Florence decided we needed to find a hiding place so we could see why he was stopping at the boatyard rather than going on downriver to the town. The best place for us was back near the footpath, so we could run away into the woods if necessary. That's where we went: a patch of scrub at the tree line that served good enough for a blind. The steamboat arrived just as we hunched down. There were two young rough-looking fellows helping the captain. After they tied off, the boys started unloading wooden crates onto the wharf. That went on and on; and little by little, the smoke coming out of the flue began to thin. Nobody was stoking it. That meant they intended to stay. We were in a predicament. Around twilight, we heard the putter-putter of a gasoline motor. A little boat arrived, tied off to the dock, the boys started handing down some crates, and they were off. Another little boat arrived, and several others after it. The captain set out kerosene lanterns as it was getting dark. Over the course of the next few hours, boats of all sorts paid a visit, and took off with their crates. Towards midnight, they

stopped for the day. The crew climbed back into the steamboat, but they didn't stoke up the boiler. They were staying till morning! Uh-oh; we were stuck! Florence didn't have a light for us to see our way back; and if she brought one along, there was no way to use it with those fellows out there. After things started getting quiet on the boat, Florence whispered that it might be best to tippy toe back in the direction of the path. If we made it a little way into the trees, we could carefully feel our way foreword back to County Highway. So, we did that! Well, we tried to do that. Holding hands, we felt our way in the dark, carefully leading with the toes of our boots to make sure we didn't stray from the ruts. This was awfully slow going! Eventually, we happened onto a clearing that wasn't supposed to be there – lost! It was only when we heard the whistle of a freight train did it occur to me that the path split off somewhere and ran alongside the river on the high ground. So, we huddled together, waiting for it to get light. Now, I've slept outside at night before, and I suppose she did, too. There are no critters out that are going to eat you, except, the mosquitoes, ticks, chiggers, and fleas. I didn't feel much like sleeping because the excitement kept me all worked up. Florence took cat naps. When light came, we brushed the pine needles off, and waited to see the smoke. After the puffs started rising up, we heard the old engine chugging. The way was safe!

“The following Friday, the deputies waiting at the boatyard dock didn't find the anticipated shipment of moonshine when the steamboat tied off. It should have ended there but the two adventuresome ladies became friends.”

“Sheriff Smallwood has yet to explain why he allowed Emma to help Florence.”

“It's obvious, Myrna: big sister Lavinia told him to keep an eye on her maniacal kinswoman. *The Family* looks after their own. That said, it didn't work out for Emma.”

“The letter?”

“Yes. Take a look at this entry. Emma's recounting of her captivity on the tugboat is the only instance where she has the opportunity to speak with her would-be abductors.”

Sheriff Bert had Deputy Wilkes follow me to and from the freight office. In between, I didn't leave Lavinia's house. Sure enough, the time came when this man came up on me outside the freight office. I pulled my lady pistol on him! Ha! Deputy Wilkes popped out of nowhere and chased the fellow. They ended up shooting it out in the alleyway behind the Railroad Hotel. That rascal ended up dead with a bullet through his face! See, there comes a point when you stop being scared of things. Anyway, a couple of weeks later, they tried again. This time, Deputy Wilkes wasn't on the ball. Actually, that's not fair because Lucy got out and I set off to find her. Five bruisers with side arms led by a skinny boy wearing baggy overalls, red collarless shirt, and a faded brown cloth cap rounded the corner of Rose and Second as I approached from the opposite direction. The boy pointed me out. "There she is!" They rushed up and crowded around me. The head bruiser asked whether I was really Emma Waddell. "The last time I checked. Who are you?" He said they were "special constables" sent to take me into custody. Well, Florence told me all about these fellows. "Where's your badges?" So, they had badges. He told me to come along and not make a fuss. What else could I do? We walked down Rose two blocks to Whitaker's dock to their rickety old steamboat. Once onboard, they tied my hands behind my back with some cord. No handcuffs? Some constables! I can loosen ropes if you give me a few minutes. On the off chance they had a pair, I wasn't letting on. Florence spent a couple days in a pitch-dark cellar, hands locked up without food and water. More or less, that's what I expected. The head bruiser barked out. "Where's the captain? We need to get going!" No captain; no crew: they were in a fix because not a one of them knew how to get the boat running. He grabbed my arm, marched me into the wheelhouse, and had me sit on the floor while he tried to get his fellows to build up some steam. By this time, working my cords gave me enough slack but I waited for the right moment to slip free. Diving into the river was on my mind. After a while, the big man came back! He wanted to know who wrote the letter I delivered to Arthur Mallet. "Did Boss Griggs put you up to this? You just tell that stinker that he might as well bring out his cleaver and cut off my head, because I'm not saying a thing!" Florence said Joe would have our heads served up on a dinner platter if he discovered what she had. This bruiser said they didn't work

for Boss Griggs. “Well, I’m not talking to you either! I suppose you want my head, too?” He wasn’t going to do that. Instead, they had other plans, like keeping me in a tomb until “Mallet’s lady” is ready to turn over the loot. “What are you talking about? In case you haven’t noticed, you’re not going anywhere without a crew to run this antique tub. Who came up with this plan? Hasn’t your boss heard about automobiles. We could be halfway to the county line by now! What do you know about running a steamboat?” He thought I needed cooling off. After taking me on deck, he told his pals to stuff me into a canvas sack, tie up the end, and throw me overboard with a rope attached! Splash, I hit the water hard, but the sack didn’t fill up right away, so I slipped those cords as fast as I could; then, started working my hand up through the tied opening. As water started getting in, and I started going under, the sack was filling up on me! I was scared! Finally, the knot slipped off, and I was out in the river, just a swimming as hard as I could. I was a good distance off when the boiler blew up – boom! It felt like somebody clubbed me with a fence post! All this wood came raining down, so I dived under! When I popped up for air, there were my boys Adam and John in this tiny boat! Late again! They are supposed to be looking out for me! Through the cloud of smoke hanging over the water, Chester was waiting on the dock. Things were on fire! Eventually, we dashed back to Lavinia’s house making our way through the growing crowd of gawkers. When Sheriff Bert came by, he said that I needed to go into hiding for a while. The safest place he had was the cells for special prisoners at the county farm. That was fine by me! It was a whole lot better than anything coming my way otherwise, so Sheriff Bert drove me to the courthouse jail to sign some papers. In no time, Matron Cole fitted me out with a jail dress and pair of “bracelets.” It wasn’t playacting this time. I was a real prisoner! Sheriff Bert said it was voluntary, but Matron Cole thought there was no point thinking about it until he worked out arrangements. Going back to Port Unity or my daddy’s farm was impossible; and on top of that, I was a witness. Anyway, my stay would last a month, six weeks at most. Once inside the jail wagon, I settled down and tried not to think about anything until the next morning.

The skinny boy in overalls and red shirt was a local collaborator, a necessary participant in the conspiracy. Mr. Yates' claim that the plotters employed the "special constables" to take Emma prisoner appears to be accurate. Likewise, his statement that Mallet's "valuable something" – the "loot" – is the reason why the plotters wanted her. Finally, we have a motive! Who is "Mallet's lady?" Is it Florence, Jane, Annie, or another behind the curtain?

A reply from Lawson

Mr. Hennessy received a telephone call from Gilbert Lawson. The gentleman who visited Arthur Mallet twice in October was Michael Dennis Shaw, an employee of the Consolidated Cotton works in Wayne City. He is middle-aged, thin, and drives a 1912 Pierce-Arrow. The gate guard logged the purpose of his visit as a business meeting. That is all Lawson knew about the man at the time. Nevertheless, he did some research to appease us. Michael Dennis Shaw worked as a broker at the Tidewater Branch of Cowan & Son before accepting a position with Consolidated Cotton. His uncle, the deceased Michael William Shaw, also worked for the same company. The man in Lydia's drawing is Hiram Grady, Mr. Mallet's former partner in a short-lived venture. Grady is erratic, hot-tempered, and delusional. He lives off an inheritance, having never earned an honest day's wages. Grady is not a salesman, and he doesn't live in Charleston. However, he drives a Dodge Brothers *Model 30* – who doesn't? The gate guard denied his request for a meeting with Mr. Mallet. Thereafter, he made a pest of himself, haunting the environs of the cotton works. After he and Arthur Mallet had a brawl outside the Second Street gate, Grady never returned. Mr. Mallet let the matter go, excusing his actions as insanity. So, assaulting Miss Rochelle wasn't a crime because Grady is insane?

Clarence Yates made a mistake: both Shaw and Grady were in Port Unity at the same time. Cato Houghton and Sam Culver provided us with different versions of hearsay narratives built upon those errors. Finally, Mr. Hennessy assumed there could only be one Michael Shaw who worked for Consolidated Cotton. Even agile minds can assemble convincing fictions from an assortment of disconnected facts.

Mr. Lawson provided us with the name of another witness who encountered both Micheal Shaw and Hiram Grady during their visits to the cotton works. It was Jesse Grantham, foreman of the compress crew. After the works closed, he took a job with Hall Shipyard as a mechanic. It should be easy to find him. Lawson added that Grantham warned Arthur in advance about the agitators' plot to take over the offices.

It amazes me that none of the individuals on the periphery of the sheriff's investigation came forward to volunteer useful leads. Why wasn't he pushing them. Mr. Buchanan thinks he is reluctant to expose *The Family* to unwanted public scrutiny. Lavinia, Emma, Florence, Jane, Sam, Sheriff Smallwood, and his wife Clarisse belong to this clan. I have my doubts. What about Alfred Cowan and Lawson? It's obvious to me that the sheriff still thinks the disappearance of Arthur Mallet is a separate case from the attempts to abduct Emma. He is convinced that the latter is the result of her entanglement with Florence. Alrighty, let's find out.

Florence Phelps

Here we go! Bumping along at full throttle on County Highway with Deputy Tom Phales is an invigorating way to start the day. I was ready for more novel experiences. A conversation with a real-life "maniacal and occasionally dangerous" woman might do, if we made it to her farm in one piece. We were bringing along both sets of Dr. Cordell's photographs to see whether she recognized any of them. Upon arriving at the Phelps farm, three men with rifles met us. That Deputy Phales brought me puzzled them.

"Who's she, Tom?"

“Settle down, nothing’s changed. Sheriff Bert is working with the railroad to catch the ringleaders. My lady passenger is the top railroad detective.” I smiled. “She wants to ask Florence some questions.”

“Well, what’s keeping you?”

Deputy Phales continued up the drive, and then parked out of view behind the barn. From every corner, the barrels of sundry firearms bore down on us. Once he stepped out of his automobile and waved his hat, they disappeared from sight. Immediately, the rear door of the main house flew open and out stormed Florence, shotgun at the ready. What have I blundered into this time? Mr. Phales opened my door and helped me out.

“Howdy, Florence. This is Hennessy’s top railroad detective Myrna Levesque.” She snarled.

“Where’s Emma?”

“Our girl is safe so don’t get worked up about nothing.”

“Alright, so what about me?”

“If your private army is not enough, I can send over Chester Wilkes.”

“No! He’s dangerous!” Ha-ha-ha! “Come inside and bring your detective lady friend. “It’s about time we settled this.” Florence brought us into her daddy’s study. After placing her shotgun on the desk, she unlocked the closet, removed several boards from the floor, and lifted out a lockbox. “See this! Everything inside is trouble. My daddy started it, and I added the rest.” She unlocked the box, removed a ledger, and handed it to Deputy Phales. “Take this.” He paged through it, groaned, handed it to me, cleared his throat, and then pondered Florence’s grin.

“That’s Boss Griggs’ secret payroll. How did you get it?”

“A little old-style bargaining, nothing more.”

“With whom?”

“A certain party who wants to remain anonymous.” He shook his head. “I acquired the ledger before the end of the war hoping to get even with Griggs. Worthless: it’s nothing more than a book of names and amounts for what you can only guess; no way to connect it to the old devil or the bookkeeper. They were sly operators all around. Eventually, those who enjoyed his patronage in the past went over to the rival

camps. After somebody finished off Joe there was no point in continuing my quest. I want to sell this place and live my life.”

“So, you claim the ledger is worthless? It’s a directory of rogues across the factions. The party who has it can coerce or buy any of them.”

“Set it aside for now. I have something much better.” Florence removed two sheets of paper from her Pandora’s Box and handed them to us. What? Signed statements from Horace Clayton and P.J. Groves?

“They’re here. Clarence and Ruppert rescued them. They’re alive.”

The statements describe how Mr. Parnell hired the men to take the steam tug from the layup basin to Unity Bluff on April 17. They had some cut wood at Sics Landing to make the distance. Upon arriving there, they found the cords stacked in two rows at the slip. Nobody was around to help them load. It took them a long time to accomplish the task. All the while, they had to maintain steam and keep an eye on the level in the boiler. They carried enough to make it downstream the full distance with the help of the current but intended to stop at Haynes Town dock for water. By the time they built up enough pressure to cast off, Mr. Arless from the Hall Shipyard drove up in his truck. There were two men standing on its bed, each with a duffel bag. He told Clayton and Groves that his men would take the tug the rest of the way. That help arrived too late for the strenuous part was a bit perturbing. The replacement crew immediately cast off. Arless drove Clayton and Groves to the abandoned icehouse to wait on the dock for a boat to take them back upriver and then he left them. Two shabby men with guns emerged from the scrub. They wore broad kerchiefs over their faces like bandits. After tying up Clayton and Groves, the wasters took them inside the compressor room. Before locking them inside, one of the men told them that Parnell “ought to know better than make deals behind a partner’s back.” A half-hour later, they heard somebody outside hammering. Eventually Clarence and Ruppert broke in and freed them.

“Max Arless and his hirelings appear to be the likely culprits who blew up the tug.” Alrighty, I guessed right: different factions perpetrated each attempt to abduct Emma, two of them preferred having her alive. It was my turn to ask questions. “We suspected as much. What does Emma know that all these murderous parties need to find out?”

“Let me sort this out for you. Emma doesn’t know anything, except that I gave her a letter to deliver to Arthur. Jane gave it to me, but she knows nothing about its contents; however, she said Cowan’s spies must not see me deliver it. That’s impossible for many reasons so I recruited Emma. Before you ask, Jane seriously considered marrying Arthur. After having to step up to raise Miles, their romance faltered. That does not mean they didn’t remain close.”

“What about you?”

“Let’s say Arthur and I remained friends despite our differences and leave it at that. Chester was more to my liking but together we’d die sooner. You two seem well-matched. That is, if Tom could lose twenty years.”

“So, tell us about his other steadfast admirer... The Lady.”

“No-no-no, you are straying too far afield. Arthur was long-gone before she took the reins.”

“Who is she?” Florence tightened her lips and shook her head. “Find out for yourself. I’m not sinking deeper.” I had a few more questions for Florence.

“Who is Hiram Grady?”

“Ruppert had a chat with Jesse Grantham, the foreman of the cotton works. He said Grady threw a fit about a payment due him from years back. After that, the guard at the gate turned him away. Clarence described Grady as ‘an obsessive middle-aged spoiled brat with enough money to fail at anything.’”

“What do you think happened to Arthur?”

“I have no idea. You’ll find the notes Clarence and Ruppert left me along with documents my daddy assembled on the various questionable activities of the late Joe Griggs and his cronies, most of them deceased. The sheriff can have all of it. I’m done! Unless you have just cause to arrest me, I’ll take my leave. Mr. Simpson and a few fellows will fetch our guests and follow you back to the courthouse.”

“One more question: who are the turncoats at the prison farm?”

“Nat and Sally Moore, you’ll find them in Clarence’s notes and also the ledger: after spying for Boss Griggs, they switched sides to the Laine County bootleggers. Sally told Clarence that they answered to Clyde Parnell. They took her for a ride in their Peerless.” Florence grinned. “That’s some automobile!”

The big man over everything is Laine County Commissioner Willard Grimes but good luck proving it. He has connections.”

“Did you know that the dead men from the tug explosion claimed to be ‘special constables’ like those who abducted you?”

“Hmm, then the game is getting more dangerous.” Deputy Phales handed her Dr. Cordell’s photographs of all eleven dead men. After examining each closely, she separated three from the pile, all ‘pirates.’

“These three participated in my abduction. Clarence and Ruppert watched Lavinia’s house. They noticed somebody else watching, too.”

“A skinny boy wearing baggy overalls, red collarless shirt, and a faded brown cloth cap?”

“It’s a woman. The fellows followed her to Mrs. Holbrook’s on Mulberry. I boarded there six weeks while working for Blackwell & Whitaker. The little imp went into the old brick privy behind the house a boy and came out a mature woman. In the back of my mind, I think I saw that red shirt before the ‘special constables’ took me. Even teenaged boys dress better than that. Be on the lookout for red shirts, Miss Levesque. You’re worth a whole lot more than anything Arthur could have squirreled away.”

Our haul for the day overwhelmed Sheriff Smallwood. He immediately arranged a meeting with the county prosecutor. Horace Clayton, P.J. Groves, and the lockbox disappeared behind closed doors. I placed a telephone call to Mr. Hennessy to report the unexpected developments. He and Mr. Buchanan arrived within fifteen minutes. Sheriff Smallwood emerged briefly to tell us to wait outside the room until they needed us. That turned into two hours; and when he came out, he told us to go home.

Hello again! Florence’s trove of evidence wasn’t as damning as she thought but it was enough to put her in danger or doom the next round of kidnappers. The prosecutor determined that the coveted “secret payroll” was inadmissible because Florence obtained it improperly. The secret files of Judge Ezra Phelps documenting the corrupt administration of the deceased Dick Browning merely bolstered a moot conclusion. Sheriff Smallwood uncovered the same and more after the assassin shot Judge Phelps. The

prosecutor concentrated his efforts upon the testimony of Clayton and Groves. Max Arless faced multiple charges connected to “the theft and unauthorized operation of a steam vessel belonging to the Hall Shipyard Company” and kidnapping Clayton and Groves, not Emma. He charged Clyde Parnell with filing a false report. The tug was not stolen from the layup basin and Hall Shipyard filed a civil lawsuit against him for loss of company property “misappropriated for personal use” resulting in “related damages.” Needless to say, the company fired him. After confessing to stealing the tug with the intention to sell its antique engine, Mr. Arless turned in the men working for him to get his charges reduced, and the “backwoods boys” who locked Clayton and Groves in the ice factory skirted kidnapping charges by tattling on some of their moonshiner friends who “do business” with Parnell. It might have gone further had he not disappeared. All denied any connection to the abduction plot and those who perpetrated it. Without concrete evidence to the contrary, it worked. The prosecutor considered the question of the five dead men known as the “pirates” and Emma’s abduction a separate case to be address later for several reasons: the official report by the harbor patrol and state authorities on the cause of the explosion was inconclusive; Florence identified three of the “pirates” who attempted to operate the steamboat as “special constables” who participated in her abduction; the authorities determined the unidentified dead men were outsiders; and an accounting of all local inventories of explosives showed no inconsistencies. Since the Arless’ crew neglected to top-off the water at Haynes Town Landing, a defense attorney might argue that the water level in the boiler was dangerously low after travelling the extra distance from Unity Bluff to the North Docks, in addition to the pirates’ over-stoking. That is the same reason why the cause remains unsettled regardless of whether explosives were onboard.

Sheriff Smallwood had Clayton and Groves sign themselves into protective custody so they might be around to testify. Sally Moore’s husband Nat disappeared. He was the next link in the chain leading to those behind the abduction plots and more. Finally, the investigation notes of Yates were inadmissible. An interesting twist: the attorney representing the estate of Joe Griggs challenged all claims that the ledger containing the secret payroll belonged to the deceased. Even so, Sheriff Smallwood compiled a list of suspected turncoats from the entries.

Since our meeting with Florence, Mr. Buchanan suspended our inquiry pending the conclusion of the various trials. Even then, he has little hope that the investigation into the abduction plots will progress further. Mr. Hennessy was pleased with my work! For the time being, I am continuing my training with Major Durant.

Mallet's loot

During the past few weeks, I assisted Ella and Captain Johnston in the Office of Station Police. This morning, the boss called me back to corporate headquarters to resume my inquiry. Several noteworthy developments occurred during the past few days.

Tim Pait, a farmer in Laine County, reported finding an abandoned Dodge Brothers *Model 30* in the woods behind his fields. Sheriff Jackson told Sheriff Smallwood that he discovered some curious papers and items inside including a small carved wooden chest containing a revolver, and a small quantity of cash. There is also a hand-drawn map of a section of North Front showing the environs of Lavinia Hall's house and the cotton works. Obviously, it predates the demolition of the plant. Sheriff Smallwood is sending Deputy Phales to make an examination.

Mr. Buchanan informed us that Jesse Grantham told Sheriff Smallwood that the "hothead" who assaulted Miss Rochelle was trying to extort money from Mr. Mallet. He came to the cotton works several times last October. Mr. Grantham overheard Grady raging from outside Mr. Mallet's office. "I want my fair share! You owe it to me! Settle up or suffer the consequences!" Grady then flung open the door and stormed off. That was it. Mr. Grantham didn't think much about it until the *Messenger* printed Lydia's drawing. Even then, the face looked familiar, but he couldn't place it. The sheriff then asked Grantham whether he thought somebody was responsible for Mallet's unexplained disappearance. He thought not. Alfred Cowan was pushing

his company to the verge of bankruptcy. After he fulfilled wartime contracts, servicing the existing debt for several ill-advised acquisitions was the only priority. Even at maximum production, the company was breaking even. Arthur told him that Cowan build his company on pillaging. He bought a mill, never spent a dime on upkeep, ran it into the ground, and then sold the land and equipment to service debt on his latest acquisition. Arthur saw the end coming and was ready to break ties with Cowan. Furthermore, he did not want to marry Annie. Grantham thought the man deliberately went missing. How? He had no idea.

Liz's only assignment at this time is helping Mr. Buchanan build a case against Arthur Mallet. Upon returning in early June, she quietly resumed her "inquiry" into this devious missing passenger. No wonder Mr. Hennessy did not want me to become fixated with "letters or letters about letters or unsubstantiated rumors of conspiracies." He sensed it was deception from the start because all the evidence that Liz uncovered initially supported that conclusion. Our work on the abduction attempts eventually revealed Mallet's motivation.

Regarding Liz's side of this "inquiry," she telephoned the offices of one of the professional organizations to which Arthur Mallet belonged. He first appears on their membership rolls in 1902 as a partner in the firm of Mallet & Grady, a cotton brokerage in Charleston. Grady was not on the membership list. In 1904, Mr. Mallet was the sole owner of the business. He worked in the offices of Rhodes Cotton Gin & Seed Oil Company in 1905; and thereafter, an employee of Cowan Cotton & Fabric. The organization prints booklets of their annual meetings for the membership, and they include group photographs of those attending. The representative offered to send Liz those booklets where Arthur Mallet appears. Finally, she asked about the elder Michael Shaw. Yes, he was a member from 1889 through 1908.

Over the ensuing weeks, Liz received several envelopes from another professional association further south containing publications with portrait photographs, biographical notes, and group photographs of members, the earliest published in 1896. A studio photographer enshrined a certain Michael Shaw's visage: he is younger than the deceased manager of the former Consolidated Cotton Brokers cotton works. The text accompanying it lauded the man's achievements as a manager for Cowan & Son Cotton, later Cowan Cotton & Fabric. He graduated from Dapple Ridge Military Academy, Class of '92. She was unable to discover anything about this institution because it no longer exists, nor was it open for long. Mr. Grady and Mr. Mallet appear together in group photographs for 1903 through 1907 booklets. Curiously, the latter only appeared in subsequent group photographs with other Cowan Cotton & Fabric management. The two men are the Arthur Mallet we knew and Hiram Grady in Lydia's drawing. The deceased Michael Shaw is the only man for which we obtained official documents confirming his identity. Earlier this week, Mr. Hennessy received an envelope containing a 1900 Cowan & Son publication with a group photograph that included the younger Michael Shaw. In his letter, Mr. Cowan stated that he did not know Mr. Shaw personally. Additionally, he enclosed an 1897 Cowan & Son publication that included another picture of Shaw. In a group photograph of the "Tidewater Branch Office" brokers on another page of the same publication, Liz saw a face that look familiar on the second row. The text at the bottom of the page listing the names gave his as Hiram Grady. What? In a telephone conversation with Gilbert Lawson, Mr. Buchanan confirmed that both Michael Shaw and Hiram Grady worked for Cowan & Son during the 1890s, but both left the company in 1901. They were never employees of Cowan Cotton & Fabric and Mr. Lawson didn't know them personally. He said it would take some time searching through the old company records to find out more about them. Where were we? The younger Michael Shaw

and Hiram Grady worked for Cowan & Son in the 1890s; group photographs taken during the 1900s for one association shows Shaw and Mallet together; and somebody, neither Shaw nor Grady nor Arthur, appears in group photographs in three booklets of another association as Arthur Mallet. Who is he? Liz said it was like trying to make her way through a house of mirrors. Mr. Hennessy remarked that none of these pieces of “evidence” she assembled were official documents. Errors in such hastily assembled publications are commonplace. Still, he could not see the management of Cowan Cotton & Fabric tolerating “name swapping” unless there was a company sanctioned conspiracy to commit fraud. He speculated that the 1897 “Tidewater Branch Office” photograph including Hiram Grady was indeed Hiram Grady, that is, the man in Lydia’s drawing. This does not fit with what we knew about the man thus far, namely, he lives off an inheritance, having never earned an honest day’s wages. The intelligence that Clarence and Ruppert passed on is inaccurate or incomplete. Considering their methods that is understandable.

Finally, guess what happens next Monday. Ladies, you might remember H.R. 4691, Approved, August 10, 1917. No? Well, now we have H.R. 11945, Approved, November 21, 1918: *An Act To enable the Secretary of Agriculture to carry out, during the fiscal year ending June thirtieth, nineteen hundred and nineteen, the purposes of an Act entitled “An Act To provide further for the national security and defense by stimulating agriculture and facilitating the distributing of Agricultural products.”* Under the Fourth section, after June 30, 1919, and lasting through the conclusion of the war and demobilization, the sale of distilled spirits “for beverage purposes” is unlawful; and after May 1, 1919, there is a prohibition on the use of “grain, cereal, fruit, or food product” in the manufacturing of beer, wine, and so forth. Oh, let us not forget about the Eighteenth Amendment, Ratified, January 16, 1919, and going into effect on January 16, 1920. So, no sale, manufacturing, transporting, importing, exporting of “intoxicating liquors

for beverage purposes” is lawful. It does not take an expansive imagination to envision the potential for profit in bootlegging and smuggling. Today, Mr. Hennessy called a meeting in his office to discuss increasing station police patrols and adding watchman rounds at all our facilities across the line to discourage peddlers of liquor on company property. He is particularly concerned about classification yards where transactions can take place between rows of freight cars. I recommended adding more fencing. Major Durant thought that was an excellent plan for the long run, but now is a suitable time to hire more watchmen. Mr. Hennessy likes both ideas but thought our first task was determining which approach or a combination of both might be most effective. Since we were discussing a problem that might happen in the near future, he wanted the captain of station police at each depot to submit their recommendations. This is the traditional bureaucratic method. After the meeting, Mr. Hennessy wanted to speak with me.

“Deputy Phales is investigating a curious overlooked detail related to the kidnapping of Clayton and Groves. He requested your assistance. Also, he just returned from his meeting with Sheriff Jackson. You can resume your inquiry tomorrow. Major Durant assigned Seargent Quince to accompany you, assist, drive you about, and so forth indefinitely. He is the Major’s pick to replace Captain Johnston whenever that happens and a suitable candidate to assume the role of Assistant Chief Inspector eventually.” Hurrah! I like him. “Mr. Quince understands your convoluted approach and can keep you from straying into trouble.” He sure can!

More news from Deputy Phales: he has reason to suspect that the Dodge Brothers *Model 30* abandoned in Laine County belonged to Hiram Grady. Sheriff Jackson told him the locked carved oak chest found on the rear seat contained the most interesting things recovered from the vehicle. It measured two feet long by one foot by one foot, obviously the work of an expert

craftsman. Somebody defeated the latch with some tool or a pocketknife. Its contents included an unloaded antique revolver, fifty dollars in paper money dating from the 1890s, and a pouch of trinkets. The loose papers inside the automobile were interesting: a note giving the directions to the salvage basin, a receipt from Whitaker & Blackwell Wholesale Hardware for a rented room dated May 12, 1919, hand-drawn maps of the environs of the cotton works, and a crude sketch of the rear of the Hall house, including a note penciled in the margin “Old woman has shotgun!” How could anybody know Lavinia had a shotgun? The drawing of the rear of Lavinia’s house suggests somebody sketched it from a position that only could exist after the leveling of the cotton works block. There was also a drawstring canvas pouch containing an assortment of tiny ceramic figurines, beads, assorted silver charms, paper flowers, lengths of ribbon, and miniature pastoral scenes painted on small wooden disks, all categorized by Sheriff Jackson as “worthless trinkets,” but I knew first-hand their significance. This was a little girl’s collection of treasures! Strange! How did that get there? It is completely out of place! Deputy Phales was at a loss. Lastly, glued to the inside of the lid was an embossed calling card belonging to Howard T. Cowan, Alfred Cowan’s deceased daddy. He assumed that Howard Cowan placed the revolver and money in the chest but the receipt for room rental obviously belonged to our cherub-faced terror Grady. Sheriff Smallwood told Deputy Phales to photograph the chest and all its contents including every item in the pouch. In addition to sending copies to Alfred Cowan to determine whether the chest was stolen, he wanted to get the opinion of local merchants as to who manufactured the “trinkets” and when. That might help us settle his question as to whether somebody placed the pouch inside the chest before Grady acquired it.

Jane Deschamps

Deputy Phales wanted us to meet him in the offices of the Hall Shipyard on the South Docks. Jane Deschamps was joining us, acting on behalf of Miles Hall. She is his guardian and administrator of his father's estate, a greater portion he willed to the boy, including real estate and a sizable portfolio of shares. Amongst the diverse properties was the disused Independence Ice Company and the abandoned Hall Boatyard. The directors could put the ice company back into operation easily if somebody buys the nearby vacant meat packing plant. By contrast, the boatyard is defunct. With the exception of a stationary engine, several wooden boats in various stages of construction, and sundry items deemed to be junk, workers removed all the equipment, tools, and metal fixtures. Masons bricked up the windows on the empty buildings and the company locksmith installed hasps and padlocks on the doors. What concerned Deputy Phales and Miss Deschamps was the deputies found a set of factory-made keys for all the padlocks for both sites on one of the men who locked Clayton and Groves in the compressor room. How was that possible? There were two sets: the Hall Shipyard had one and Jane kept the other. The company secured their set in a locked cabinet and anybody using them had to sign the log maintain by the locksmith. The last person signing for them was Clyde Parnell on November 12, 1917. Clayton and Groves needed access to the stationary engine at the boatyard. He promptly returned the keys four days later. Jane kept her set in a locked key cabinet at her Chestnut Street home. Nobody has access to them. Therefore, an unauthorized set found its way into the hands of Arless. When Yates and Kline freed Clayton and Groves they attempted to pry open the lock but ended up ripping half the hasp from the door. When Sheriff Smallwood and his deputies search the Independence Ice Company in midmonth, they found the lock hanging from the broken hasp as Florence's boys left it. Deputy Wilkes took a photograph. The next day, the shipyard sent Josh

Evenson, their locksmith, to repair the damage. Aside from some lubrication, the padlock was in good working order. Mr. Evenson, who assumed trespassers broke into the compressor room, became concerned upon learning that somebody locked two men inside. He explained why in detail.

“When we changed out the locks in 1909, Whitaker & Blackwell Wholesale Hardware gave us a good deal on some miscellaneous padlocks they had left over from fitting out the courthouse two decades earlier. They were heavy two-and-a-half-inch cast bronze tumbler locks with spring covers, the three-inch three-tumbler version of the same, and three-and-a-quarter inch four tumbler pad locks ordered for the cells in the courthouse jail that the contractor decided not to use. The locks open with bronze keys with warding and clefts. There were twenty-four keys per dozen, but they came in half-dozen boxes with a dozen keys. I accounted for all these extra keys. There are seven keys on Miss Deschamps’ ring and seven on ours for the twenty-eight locks at the boatyard except for the large key opening the door to the pipe chamber for the drydock. That’s a mortice lock and the key is on a separate ring. The same keys open the fourteen padlocks we installed on the Independence Ice Company buildings. What puzzles me is that all the keys they took off those rascals are not duplicates made from blanks. A copy never looks as good as the original. I suspect somebody didn’t install a lock and two keys from each half-dozen box – five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, and three, or six boxes – twenty-eight padlocks of the same type opened with seven keys; five, ten, and four make fourteen for the ice company or minus one, minus one, and minus two from the three boxes, or six of seven keys. Deputy Phales and Sergeant Quince looked confused. “With two keys per lock set aside, we might have another unauthorized ring of keys in the hands of the evil-minded.” Oh-my, something occurred to me!

“Sir, when you said miscellaneous padlocks left over from the courthouse did you mean full boxes of a half-dozen with twelve keys?”

“No, Whitaker & Blackwell delivered full and partial boxes of a half-dozen, but each full box came with a dozen keys.”

“So, you had two unique keys that open only one of the six locks in a full box but the same two will also open one of the locks in another full box providing that the model number is the same.”

“Yes, otherwise each ring would have forty-two keys instead of seven.”

“What happened to the rest of the locks?”

“We used them here. It doesn’t matter. Everybody must sign for keys.”

“How many of the partial boxes did you receive?”

“The three-and-a-quarter and three-inches locks were surplus placed in the same box with their keys. The two-and-a-half-inch came in ten full boxes and three were partial. We used those for the ice factory and boatyard because we had enough locks keyed the same to get away with using the least number of keys.” I pulled Deputy Phales aside.

“When you get back, it might be prudent to consult the county locksmith about what the original padlocks in the courthouse secure.” After a moment, he took a deep breath and nodded. I turned my attention back to the locksmith. He continued the discussion with his recommendations.

“At modest expense, we can easily replace the entire lot of these locks with something more up to date or can switch them with others that we have in inventory. Either way, the keys of any unauthorized set would not work.” Miss Deschamps was quick to come to a discussion.

“That sounds fine for the Independence Ice Company since the buildings contain valuable equipment. I do not think changing the locks at the boatyard is necessary. Nothing inside is valuable except the stationary engine and it was not worth moving in 1909. If commercial vessels use the dock to distribute goods to the locals it might be advantageous to set up a store in one of the disused buildings. It would take some study to see whether the amount of traffic justifies the expense. The property is part of Miles’ inheritance, so I do not want to make decisions concerning it that might not ensure a profit.” My mouth dropped. “The site might be valuable for manufacturing once County Highway becomes the thoroughfare its planners predicted. Though left to the elements, the buildings are sound. Pulling them down would not discourage trespassers. That aside, the rescuers freed the men imprisoned inside the compressor room by prying off the hardware. Changing the locks would not prevent somebody from gaining entry by the same means. So, why are we here?” Deputy Phales replied.

“Ma’am, we are here investigating a crime.”

“Yes, now we know why a set of unauthorized keys exists. Whitaker & Blackwell sold us the remainder of a lot taking up space in their warehouse since 1887. I can only imagine that they originally purchased it at a discount for the same reason; and continuing the practice, sold boxes to anybody who needed them. We cannot know who has another set of factory keys; likewise, it is unlikely they would be aware that their keys open locks at the boatyard. Have you considered the possibility that Whitaker & Blackwell might have several boxes on their shelves for sale to the public?” Deputy Phales exhaled.

“We are only concerned about how Mr. Arless acquired a set of factory-made keys. Now, we know. The question is whether an informed accomplice assisted him. At the moment, we suspect

Clyde Parnell. He was the last person signing for the company set and they were in his possession for four days.” Uh-huh, now we are on to something.

“Mr. Evenson, these keys are unusual. How easy would it be to acquire blanks to make copies?”

“Difficult, Miss Levesque; the locks are old, patented in the 1870s. It would be easier to buy an up-to-date replacement than order blanks from the manufacturer.”

“That is, unless the hardware store still happens to have an unopened box of the locks collecting dust on a shelf. I think we need to pay a visit to Whitaker & Blackwell.” Jane chuckled.

“It appears that Miss Levesque figured it out. Is there anything else, gentlemen?” Deputy Phales played his high card.

“Yes, Miss Deschamps, consider the damage done and five men killed as a result of this misappropriation of property. Some might argue that the owners of said property bear some responsibility for not taking reasonable measures to secure it.”

“Sir, reasonable does not encompass the extraordinary. Mr. Arless confessed his crew docked the vessel and left the boiler to go cold. It was those the *Messenger* call ‘pirates’ who boarded it and caused the explosion. Thus far, nobody has established a connection between Mr. Arless and Mr. Parnell with these men.”

“So, if you left your automobile in the drive running and somebody stole it you are not partially responsible for an accident he caused?”

“Yes, but the company had no intention of moving the vessel from the salvage basin. That was entirely Mr. Parnell’s doing. As for locks, as our locksmith just explained, the manufacturers do not make every lock one-of-a-kind. It wouldn’t be practical or profitable. Somebody

somewhere has a key that will open another's lock. The chances of either party knowing it is next to nil. However, all of us know Whitaker & Blackwell sells boxes of locks with keys that open padlocks at the boatyard and the courthouse. They sold them gambling on the possibility that nobody would ever know about the weakness, much less exploit it. I imagine that they are not unique. Any company selling locks is doing the same thing." Brilliant! "Do you have something to add Mr. Evenson?"

"Changing them out is easy. We have enough up-to-date padlocks in inventory. None came from Whitaker & Blackwell. Also, I'll order a special lock for the gate. Nobody can bring an automobile into the boatyard unless they pry it open." Jane smiled. It was time for me to enter the fray.

"Miss Deschamps, Lester Whitaker's Northeast River Navigation Company regularly docks their steamboat at the wharf. Do you have an arrangement?"

"No. They do so without our permission. The wharf juts out in the river so we can do nothing about it."

"Then the entire boatyard is open from the river side. Anybody can camp on the grounds or wander about the array of buildings."

"Like whom?"

"Laine County bootleggers come to mind."

"Bootleggers did not steal our tug to deliver moonshine!"

"Mr. Parnell might think differently. What good is a sixty-year-old wooden hulled sidewheeler powered by a wood burning crosshead engine? The shipyard couldn't use it to pull a barge of scrap metal to Unity Bluff, but its maneuverability in the coves and shallows of the river made it ideal for liquor running. So, why did Mr. Parnell tell Clayton and Groves to take it

downriver to unity bluff? I don't think they are telling us the full story. They were transporting a cargo of moonshine."

"Indeed, Miss Levesque! That sounds like a good motive for hanging on to it... or not."

"So, have you spoken with Florence lately?"

"Yes, she claims Lester Whitaker transports moonshine and docks at the wharf to break bulk. I'm surprised she wanders over there alone. My uncle and his men raided his boat and found nothing but crates of produce. It was an embarrassment with political complications. Florence is not right in the head, so the Whitakers let it go. Where are you going with this?"

"Your private detectives Yates and Kline saved Emma Waddell from the 'pirates.' They know exactly when and where to be and who had a fast little gasoline-powered boat they could rent. Mr. Yates told Emma that they work for "The Lady." Is that you?"

"Those two are completely mad since they came back from the war. They worked for Sam; and then, inexplicably left his employment. We had best continue this conversation elsewhere. Come to my house in an hour and I'll tell what I know."

The Letter

The Alan Deschamps House is located on the half-block on Sixth Street between Dock and Church in the Southside. It is one of those overly elaborate Queen Anne Style mansions, replete with pickelhaube turrets, bay windows, and wrap around porch. Our meeting reconvened in the downstairs library. Immediately, Jane pointed to a ring of keys on the table.

"Lavinia gave me these. She said that they open the padlocks at the boatyard." On examining the keys, I immediately recognized them as belonging to mortise locks.

"Miss Deschamps, these keys do not open padlocks. Mrs. Hall gave you the wrong ring."

“How would she know? When Captain Hall had his accident, these were the only keys found in his office. He carried a set of the essential shipyard keys on his person.”

“Who packed up his office things and sent them to Lavinia?”

“Mr. Arless.”

“Now, we know. There isn’t another set of factory-made keys. He kept Captain Hall’s ring for the padlocks.”

“So, there is no need to change them?”

“Mr. Evenson just told us he had better locks in inventory. He can use the old padlocks on something at the shipyard. You have watchmen patrolling the grounds. That makes up the difference.”

“Alright! Please take a seat. I have something to show you.” She opened a cabinet, removed a carved oak chest, and then placed it upon the table. “Florence doesn’t know about this. All the fuss over the letter is complete nonsense. In early September, Arthur asked me to meet a lawyer named Walter Pierce at the station. He couldn’t do it himself because Lawson had his men watching, and his former partner was a deranged fiend who wanted to settle scores. Mr. Pierce stayed long enough to load two valuable parcels into my automobile. However, Mr. Pierce said Arthur could start a new life anywhere. He left on the next northbound express. I have no idea what they contain. Arthur had the only key to the chests. When Mr. Grady began threatening Arthur, I placed one of the boxes in safekeeping with Lavinia. I informed him of the change using the shipyard message boy. That’s what I should have done with the first letter. He retrieved it from her in early January, but not wanting to carry it into the cars, he removed the contents, placing them in a portmanteau. I was expecting he would return for this but now it seems

unlikely. Now, I want Uncle Bert to take care of it. Miles' safety comes first." I removed the pack of lockpicks from my boot.

"May I open it?"

"Can you? I mean, without damaging it?"

"I sure can." It only took a moment. Deputy Phales and Phillip watched over my shoulder. Once I lifted the lid we beheld stacks of bonds, most had already matured. All were bearer bonds, meaning that anybody having the instrument in hand could redeem them. Deputy Phales found a card pasted inside the lid, "Howard T. Cowan." He frowned.

"We found the twin to this one in Grady's automobile. Unfortunately, no sign of the man. The contents of the chest included an antique revolver (certainly belonging to Grady), some money, and a little pouch of trinkets. Miss Levesque thinks it is a collection of pretty things belonging to a little girl. If there was a fortune in bonds in that box Arthur took it. I think the time has come for us to show Lavinia some pictures."

"Do these trinkets include little round painted scenes on wood?"

"Yes!"

"The pouch belongs to Lucy. She collected all those things when she was a child. I can't imagine her letting go of it." I interjected.

"Let's find out after we take care of this mess. If I understand you right, Miss Deschamps, you want to pass this nightmare off on Sheriff Smallwood because you have what everybody wants. There are certain things that do not fit together. How could anybody know Lavinia has a shotgun? How could the 'special constables' or Laine County bootleggers know anything about Arthur's secret cache of bonds?"

Jane had an answer for both questions. Somebody on Lavinia's household staff is spying on her and the only person who knew about the bonds was Hiram Grady. I recall how he was unable to hire thugs in this county, so somebody introduced him to the Laine County bosses. I suspect Grady outlived his usefulness. The gears of my mind started grinding away.

"Did you see Arthur Mallet in Port Unity in early-January?"

"No. He stayed long enough to get his goods and purchase a ticket on the afternoon train."

"Who told you this?"

"Emma Waddell brought me a letter, though Lavinia penned it after he left. As for the empty chest, I imagine Lavinia gave it to Lucy."

"This happened the Second of January?"

"Yes, it was a transaction in passing. I doubt whether he'll risk returning for the rest."

"Both chests have the card of Howard Cowan pasted inside the lid. Did he steal these bonds?"

"Until this moment, I did not know what this chest contained. Certainly, an attorney would not pass on stolen goods. Furthermore, that is merely a calling card. It does not say "Property of Howard T. Cowan." Let my uncle determine who owns what."

"After all these months, why haven't you told him about Arthur's visit, Walter Pierce, and the chests?"

"Lavinia said she would take care of it. I was apt to stir up a scandal like my mother and loose custody of Miles. In the end, I know no more about what happened to Arthur than you."

"When did Mr. Yates and Mr. Kline start working for Lavinia."

“After Emma’s fiancé Ned had an accident. A few days before, he caught some outsiders beating one of his men in the yards. Ned took an axe handle to the hoodlums, leaving the chief ruffian with a broken hand. He vowed revenge.”

“Yes, I know. Ned never reported the encounter. Hitherto, nobody has fully explained Emma’s place in the scheme of things. She worked in the freight office, provided companionship for Lucy, and assisted Sheriff Smallwood. What else?”

“Her great-grandmother was a Smallwood; and as you might expect, her line includes Phelps and Culver women. Florence and Clarisse Smallwood are the last of the Phelps line, Sam has three boys, Uncle Bert has two, and Miles is the last Hall heir.”

“What about you?”

“Arthur proposed to me, but I turned him down because Lavinia didn’t trust him, and Florence told her that he was too old for me. He is only in his forties! That’s hypocritical of both of them, particularly Lavinia. She married old Captain Hall and then carried on with Pete Bresnahan. What really sealed it was forcing me to take Miles away from Lucy. I had to go to court to prove that I could provide for the boy without the help of a man and show that my character was unblemished. Since I am the wealthiest woman in the region, the first point was easy. The second impedes any normal courtship. It is better to wait until Miles attains his majority. How about you?”

“Me? I’m free to court any gentleman who works for the company providing they are on the list of approved suitors. I’m not sure whether it is proper that I court them rather than contrarywise but the war and being in cold storage these last four years necessitates dispensing with formalities. Besides being a half-inch short of six-foot and potentially damaging, I come with an assembly of distinguished gentlemen who can complicate any marriage. *The Family*

comes first for you; for me, it is the company. It is the same for my sister Ella and Liz Buchanan. Your plight, if anything more than illusion, is consolidating and increasing wealth for a clan on the threshold of extinction.”

“You’re harsh, Miss Levesque! Why should I continue speaking with you?”

“Arthur skipped off, leaving you holding the bait. He deceived the fiancée left at the altar to unwittingly light his bonfire. Only Emma and her protectors kept the flames from your door. While pointing that perennial nuisance Hiram Grady toward his fate was certainly one of the objectives of Arthur’s plot, he demonstrated little regard for the well-being of his ladyloves, or women in general. Though Florence was reticent to reveal her reason for breaking off their engagement, it was obvious to me that she preferred the company of men who genuinely care for her even though they consider her maniacal. You were deceived! Having Florence deliver your letter was cruel; she having Emma be her second was cowardly. You provided him with the match, and he placed it in the hand of the one person he knew would strike it. I seriously doubt whether Arthur imagined the upheaval it would cause. So, where are the avenging angels Clarence and Ruppert? I doubt whether they decided to leave the field before the decisive battle.” Where did that come from? Jane was on the verge of tears. I’m nice, well, I was. Phillip looked apprehensive, while Deputy Phales gazed off. Finally, Jane regained her composure.

“Tell Lavinia that I am so sorry. Regardless of what she thinks of me, I must put Miles before her wishes. He calls me mother. Lavinia knows how to reach Clarence and Ruppert.” She turned to Deputy Phales. “Do you intend to arrest them?”

“We should but for what? Emmet Hamer wouldn’t incriminate himself, and don’t expect Emma to say anything against ‘her boys.’ Chester was on the verge of arresting Florence, but he

refuses to say why. Otherwise, we can't charge her. That leaves you. Let me appraise Sheriff Smallwood of the situation. What do you say, Detective Levesque?"

"That's perfectly fine with me. You might mention that he should send a few deputies to assist with the transfer of a 'valuable something.' I like that term. It could be silver ingots or maternal love. I'm sure Miss Deschamps would not mind if you use her telephone?" Jane nodded. After Deputy Phales left the room, Jane and I exchanged nervous smiles. I removed a small sack from my jacket pocket. "Ginger snaps? I baked them last night." Needless to say, she declined. After Deputy Phales returned, Jane timidly asked whether she could call her attorney. Trouble was on the way.

Phillip and I arrived at corporate headquarters at a quarter of five after spending the entire day going through the maze with Jane. Now, I steeled myself for a collective rebuke from Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Hennessy, and Granddaddy James. They allowed Phillip to attend the meeting because they wanted to hear his version of the encounter. During the last two hours, my gentlemen received telephone calls from Jane's attorney, Prosecutor Kerns, and Sam. All of them wanted to know whether the company intended to file charges against Jane since she agreed to testify against Arthur Mallet. Taken aback, Mr. Buchanan refused to provide them with an immediate answer. He had not read my report. I had yet to write one. Surprisingly, Sheriff Smallwood filed charges against his niece, only later to withdraw them after she agreed to cooperate. He had few reservations about seeking an arrest warrant for Florence but relented after Deputy Phales told him that it was best to obtain her testimony without duress. She could claim ignorance of the plot. That left Lavinia. She endeavored to protect Emma. Since the company was only concerned about the crimes perpetrated against our employee, Mr. Hennessy concurred with Mr. Buchanan's decision not to file charges against her. Even so, both wanted

Major Durant present during Sheriff Smallwood's questioning. Only she could bring Clarence and Ruppert out from the shadows. Mr. Buchanan cleared his throat. Alrighty, here it comes:

"Did Jane Deschamps willingly participate in Arthur Mallet's scheme to deceive our company into investigating his feigned disappearance while travelling our line?"

"No. She remain silent for the benefit of Arthur Mallet while Sheriff Smallwood undertook a fruitless investigation. However, Lawson lied to all of us concerning the same."

"Did Miss Deschamps callously disregard Miss Waddell's safety in order to further her ends?"

"No. Sheriff Smallwood and Mr. Hennessy took great pains to withhold Emma's identity in all the dangerous situations she faced. Lavinia, on instructions from the sheriff, fended off all questions from the curious, including those from members of *The Family*. That aside, Lavinia and Jane have not been on speaking terms since Arthur paid the former an unannounced visit in January." I continued by explaining the precarious state of familial ties. Lavinia is the undisputed matriarch; Clarisse Smallwood is her heir apparent; the second in line is Emma Waddell, an heir to her father's vast landholdings providing that she marries an industrious young man who can farm it; Florence is the headstrong bad girl; Lucy, the child bride, is still a child; and Jane is an inconvenience whose birthright is suspect.

"We are not concerned with her defense, Myrna, only whether we should press charges."

"You should not."

"Did you come to this conclusion objectively?"

"Yes."

“Do you have anything to add, Sergeant Quince?” He shook his head. “It’s settled. We will not charge her.” Granddaddy James and Mr. Hennessy nodded. “So, sergeant, how well did Miss Levesque perform?” He cleared his throat.

“Much better than Deputy Phales. Miss Deschamps has an agile mind and can counter with a strong response. Myrna, I mean Officer Levesque, led her to reveal too much early on, even before she showed us the chest. After she opened it with one of her lockpicks, Miss Deschamps lost her grip. Officer Levesque pressed the offensive until she surrendered. Brilliant! Then she offered her vanquished opponent some ginger snaps. They’re wonderful!” Mr. Hennessy smiled and nodded.”

“I’m satisfied. Your turn, Roscoe.”

“Excellent work, Myrna! Tomorrow, I am having Major Durant attend Sheriff Smallwood’s ‘chat’ with Mrs. Hall. In the meanwhile, Sergeant Quince must accompany you to a meeting with Deputy Phales. He wants to discuss a strategy for snaring the betrayer in the red shirt. It’s plausible that she is a link to the outsiders who hired the ‘special constables.’ Mr. Phales also has a list of the ladies who board at Mrs. Holbrook’s house. We are hoping that Mrs. Hall can persuade Clarence Yates and Ruppert Kline to provide us with some fresh intelligence. I assume they have been busy at something, preferably not creating mayhem. Time to run along. Mrs. Keane is apt to get upset if you’re too late for dinner.” Upset? It was a quarter of six!

A shifting perspective

Next morning, before our meeting with Deputy Phales, Phillip and I discussed how our interpretation of the evidence changed since Jane revealed her secret. Still, there were many missing pieces to our puzzle and some no longer fit in the places we first thought. That the

“pirates,” rather “special constables” intended to use the old steam tug for their escape was perplexing. According to Florence’s statement concerning her abduction, they had a Hudson touring car. We also discarded our previous assumption that they planned a daytime assault on the Hall house after Emma’s notebook identified them as kidnappers masquerading as lawmen. Now we must scrutinize their escape strategy. The men managed to escort Emma through the late afternoon bustle to the tug without attracting any attention. If Chester and the “Peerless boys” had not taken them by surprise, they had time to shove off providing the captain and stoker returned. Neither one of us thought any competent crew would leave their vessel unattended with hot embers in the firebox and steam in her boiler. So, how far could they go. We know the tug started at the layup basin, took on wood at Sics Landing, and should have replenished water at Haynes Town dock. Calculating consumption based upon this distance, the crew could navigate the tug to the North Docks. On the return trip, providing they replenished fuel and water there (Nobody at the port these days deals in cords of wood), Haugh Landing is the limit they could go without taking on fuel, Haynes Town dock for water. Nine miles of strong current separates the North Docks from the latter. It would make more sense if they parked their conspicuous Hudson touring car at Haugh Landing but better at Unity Bluff Landing, a mere two miles upriver from the North Docks. Either way, the kidnappers would have direct access to County Highway. We must ask our friend Agnes Tedder at Unity Bluff Station. Having little to occupy her time, she would have noticed anything unfamiliar in her environs. I also must ask Deputy Phales whether his men noticed cords of wood stacked at Haugh Landing. During the “Battle of Sandyfield Cutoff” they might have used them for cover during their assault from the rear.

I am no longer certain that more than one party wanted Emma. The ‘special constables’ are outside contractors; the backwoods wasters are hirelings of last resort: a powerful individual is

the paymaster for both. Chester and Florence point to the Laine County bootleggers, but to whom do they pay tribute? Clyde Parnell and Max Arless occupy low places in the hierarchy. A steady flow of moonshine continues to supply Port Unity's shady saloons despite their absence. We spent so much time speculating about what Emma knew that we overlooked the obvious reason for knowing the author of the letter: the kidnappers intended to ransom Emma for the bonds. How did they know Arthur left behind half of them? Hiram Grady let it slip.

Deputy Phales had good news for us. Myrtle Pruitt, the girl who can't keep a secret, boards at Mrs. Holbrook's. Since she worked at the freight office, it would be easy to use her as a conduit for conveying deceptions to the red-shirted betrayer. I don't think Florence would be deceived so easily by one of her fellow boarders dressing up as a boy, but if the lady partnered with a real boy, it would work nicely. Tom thought culling the ladies who had not boarded with Mrs. Holbrook in 1912 was a start. I thought not. We must shake the tree and see what flies out. So, what deception should we plant? We happened to have a nice one in the works: Mr. Skinner was getting the Number 435 ready to pull a special train.

Lavinia agreed to ask Yates and Kline to meet with us when they decide to report back to her. She said "they went behind enemy lines" in late May and have not returned. No matter: they are free-roaming, cagy, act on their own initiative, and pursue their goal tenaciously. She expected to hear from "her boys" eventually. Lavinia identified the contents in the chest. Arthur took out a stack of bonds and left behind the key. The currency belonged to her, her late husband owned the antique revolver, and the pouch of trinkets were Lucy's treasure. She then produced the key. Sheriff Smallwood told her that the chest and its contents were evidence, but he would return all of it eventually.

Mr. Hennessy is in communication with our favorite government contractor, the expert investigator in corporate fraud, counterfeiting, smuggling, and espionage, the magnificent Charles M. Creswell. Yes, ladies, the most enigmatic, manipulative, and dangerous man who ever crossed our path (repeatedly). Mephistopheles in the guise of a Southern gentleman is an accurate description. If trading certain perpetual *ennui* for a brief exciting lifespan of significance sounds appealing, he has the appropriate contract to make it reality. In this instance, Mr. Hennessy suspected Arthur Mallet, Hiram Grady, Michael D. Shaw, and Walter Pierce had incorporated a business to serve as a façade for some type of illegal activity involving foreign bonds. Howard T. Cowan might have participated in this curious enterprise. Also, Sheriff Smallwood and Prosecutor Kerns were curious about the bonds they seized. Were they authentic or counterfeit, valuable or worthless, legally acquired or stolen, and lastly, who owned them? Did they belong to Arthur Mallet, the heirs of Howard Cowan, Cowan Cotton & Fabric, or Jane? Mr. Kerns thought the whole business was a federal matter regardless of whether a crime was committed.

Mr. Buchanan and Liz left on the northbound express this morning to attend a business meeting. He did not leave a detailed itinerary with Mr. Hennessy. Very unusual! I am taking her place in his office for the next week.

Fourth of July

Thursday, Ella, Louis, Phillip, and I attended the Independence Day Celebration. We had a grand time! Afterwards, we brought our fellows home for fried chicken, rice with gravy, buttery peas, and our special custard pie. We set up the whole feast outside like a picnic and played band music on the phonograph. Mrs. Keane was off for the day, so everybody was jolly! We went

inside at dusk. Ella and I entertained the boys with some new parlor tricks, and then we played poker. Our fellows went home at around eleven. Afterwards, Ella shared her thoughts on the state of my inquiry after paging through my journal. A recurring linking that we often recognize but never explore thoroughly is Blackwell & Whitaker Wholesale Hardware, specifically “Old Man” Whitaker’s unscrupulous boy Lester. Florence suspected he was up to something when she assumed the guise of an office girl in 1912. She might have been right about him all along.

Not a cellar

Florence’s detailed description of the route taken by the “special constables” is problematic after they blindfolded her at the turn onto Sics Landing Road. The men put her in a rowboat for an hour-long journey to somewhere. Sics Landing is ideal for launching boats of many sizes but anybody rowing downstream soon encounters strong currents at the narrows leading to the railroad bridge. It is exceedingly difficult to handle a small boat with a gasoline motor in that stretch, much less a rowboat. Many have died there, not only the recent six, but workers unfortunate to fall in while building the several railroad bridges at that location going back to the first in the 1830s. Nobody to my knowledge has ever attempted to swim across. Rowing upstream is easy, but nothing is there, save magnificent Culver’s Lodge and the abandoned Hall Boatyard on our side, neither having any structure with a cellar, and on the Laine County side, timberland, and a scattering of shacks. Below is an excerpt from her statement.

For six weeks, I played the role of an unremarkable office girl flawlessly. Then, in October, two well-dressed men followed me on my walk home from work. After passing Cowan Cotton & fabric, another two similarly dressed men stepped out from the alley separating

Paulson's Store on the west corner of Third and Mulberry and Northside Coal & Ice. The two in front advanced towards me displaying their badges. This was in broad daylight and there were many people on the street! I turned back only to see one of the men to my rear gripping his holstered revolver and his partner preparing to put me in handcuffs. Initially, I thought Dick Browning dreamed up more charges against me; it was only after they rendered me incapable of offering resistance did I realize these men were not Browning's deputies in street clothing. I asked who they were. One produced an official looking warrant for my arrest issued by the court in Laine County. They were "special constables" extraditing me! I could not constrain a laugh. So, Sheriff Dick fabricated evidence to have me charged with crimes in Laine County? After spending a month locked in a cell at the prison farm, I was not worried about spending a few days in Sheriff Jackson's jail while Mr. Smallwood sorted out things. When a shiny black Hudson automobile pulled up to the curb, only then did I start feeling that something was amiss. Nevertheless, when the head constable told me to step in, I complied. What else could I do? Obviously, I was under arrest and none of the bystanders would interfere with officers performing their duty. Once seated, one of the men at my side assured me that the judge usually sets the bail low for those accused of selling moonshine. Moonshine? So, that's what the crafty devil has lined up for me! Slightly relieved it wasn't worse, I slumped back in the opulent seat and braced myself for a bumpy ride on County Highway. At least, this was so much better than enduring the jail wagon. The constables bringing me seemed professional, reserved, and at times, congenial. We passed Haynes Town, the bend in the track where the railroad continues over the Northeast River Bridge, the drive leading up to the homeplace, and then the prison farm. It was then that the constable on my left blindfolded me! Frightened beyond sanity, I lost the

power of speech. The men, however, had nothing to say. Once they took a sharp turn to the left, I knew where they were taking me: Sics Landing! When the automobile came to a stop, they wasted little time seating me in a rowboat. Now, I was certain that they intended to drown me like Fred Wheeler! That didn't happen. They rowed for about an hour, I presume downstream because of the train whistles from Northeast Depot. Upon arriving at some point where the water was shallow, the two lifted me onto some gently sloping dry land, and then we walked a winding footpath, each holding one of my arms. I sensed we were ascending a hill; and when we descended a flight of stone steps, there was no doubt in my mind we were on a bluff. I heard the sound of a key turning in a lock, the opening of a door, and then they took me inside a damp cold room.

Alrighty, let's think about this cellar. Florence was on an eight-foot chain and couldn't reach either end of its length, so, larger than sixteen feet. Narrow? In the perpetual darkness, she wouldn't know that unless she could touch both walls, eight feet or less. I'd say six, because Florence described a fitting for plumbing or steam that can only be a pipe flange. It is for bolting two pieces of pipe together. It's a service passageway for pipe. We have plenty like it in Unity Station. I want to explore them!

The villains took Florence uphill on a pathway leading from the river and then down a flight of steps. That sounds like the outside entrance to our basement, or it could be steps on the north side of the terminal connecting Hayne Street (higher) to the passenger yard (lower) but it is ground level in both places. Likewise, if you enter the bottom floor of the courthouse, you must take the steps descending below street level; you enter the same floor in the rear from the street. The topography determines the ground level where you enter. Florence assumed they held her in

a cellar. It might be the bottom floor of a building located on a slope. Commerce Street ascends from river street to Fifth Avenue. Every building in that part of downtown is on a slope, even as far north as Corporate Headquarters, so we have the same arrangement. Finally, the “depression” cut into the floor is for draining off condensation and spill. Water flows down, so there’s the proof it is above the level of the river, certainly built into a slope. The whole sounds more like part of a factory than a dwelling. There’s one problem: if you find it, proving that it is the place where the *faux* constables imprisoned Florence is difficult. I must share my analysis with Deputy Wilkes. He knows the area.

An examination of the landings

Saturday, Mr. Hennessy allowed me to leave the safety of the terminal briefly for a boat excursion on the Northeast River with deputies Tom Phales and Chester Wilkes. Sergeant Quince accompanied me. All of us dressed inconspicuously, I in my drab charcoal dress, boots, and “floppy” hat. The object of our adventure was examining all the landings where the Laine County bootleggers could unload their wares. Both gentlemen thought Florence was correct about the moonshine coming into our county by boat. We came ashore several times to look for evidence of motorized vehicles using the old wagon paths to reach the landings. There were recent tire tracks at Haugh Landing, near the site of the Battle of Sandyfield Cutoff. At the docks of the old ice factory, a mile below the cutoff, we discovered evidence that a large boat had recently tied off. Between these places, there were numerous streams feeding into both sides of the river navigable by johnboats. Deputy Phales remarked that the citizens of Northeast Township know where all these streams begin, along with all their twists and bends. Well, the

railroad crosses all of them. In addition to the surveys in the company archives, the county has soil maps and those prepared for highway work. These boys really need me!

Thus far, we examined the landings looking for ruts from automobiles. If the steamboat loaded the moonshine onto a dozen small boats on its way downriver the crates could be transfer to automobiles at a number of places. Deputy Wilkes noted that some logging roads intersect the array of streams emptying into the river. Even so, when the “captain” broke the shipment down, it was too difficult to intercept all of it enroute to many points in the county. No doubt, somebody maintained a reserve stockpiled in their barn to offset the inventory lost to lawmen. During the war, the supply of bootleg liquor never slacked despite the regular raids carried out by the deputies. Furthermore, the liquor they captured never amounted to more than a two-day supply for each shady saloon. Like any well-managed business, the bootleggers plan for a certain percentage of lost inventory.

I envisioned the organization of the bootleg liquor enterprise as an hourglass: many manufacturers of the product contributed to a shipment, and many participated in its distribution. Its narrowest point was transportation in bulk on the river. Even so, we could not dismiss the possibility that the shipment transported over the roads was part of the procedure. Deputy Phales wanted to know what I thought were the limitations to this arrangement. “How do these moonshiners keep up deliveries despite all the loose-tongue talk from their customers and our raids?” Well, I laughed! Compare the similarities and differences of freight transport by rail and inland navigation.

The railroad neither produces nor sells the goods it carries. We receive freight at our warehouses, loaded onto cars, and dispatched them to depots on the line. There, our men make up trains bound to separate locations from the cars. It is a very precise system requiring intensive

organization. On the river, many vessels are transporting a variety of commodities, mostly those which are bulky and not needed immediately. There are fewer clients and there are specific locations for breaking bulk. Sometimes, the entire shipment is destined for one location. Forest products such as lumber, a major commodity from Laine County, proceeds down the Northeast River on barges, particularly from those mills located in those areas not near the spur from Spring Garden to Wayne City. Small vessels bring sundry finished goods upriver to the old communities that grew up in the age of inland navigation. Once well-situated at landings, they are now inconveniently located to take advantage of the railroad and the system of roads is still primitive. This sparsely populated area, mostly woodlands and swamps, is favorable for river commerce. If organized, somebody acts as agent and manager of merchandise, paying for quantities produced by many, storing it in various locations, and then arranging for its shipment. A transportation agent organizes the loose coalition of independent owners of vessels, paying each a set amount for the service. The producers and retailers of the product are variable. The bootleggers mimic the organization of legitimate business. I envision it thusly: there are three divisions, each independent, sharing only necessary particulars. In this way, "loose-tongue talk" does not endanger the entire enterprise. By paying the unscrupulous owners of vessels plying the river on legitimate business, the shipment continues to a landing where the small boats receive it.

It's worth noting that Emma and Florence did not know what was in the crates unloaded at the old boatyard dock. For all we know, it could have been canned goods or fruit. There are residents of the northern section of the county living on the banks of the river and alongside the many creeks emptying into it who would welcome such a service. Several boats deliver manufactured goods upriver and bringing back produce and forest products, including Whitaker's navigation company. Lester Whitaker owns one steamboat but is the agent for several

independent operators. It is not farfetched to imagine including a couple of cases or three of moonshine along with boxes of cucumbers on the downriver leg.

Deputy Phales wondered how the money flowed upward in my three-part organization. It is a given that everybody involved must make a profit. Since the retailer (or bartender) can only charge so much for the product, the percentages for each participant progressing backward to the producer (or distiller) is small.

This arrangement, however, has limits: increased demand requires more organization of these divisions, including more producers. The volume of spirits distilled must be enormous to justify the cost. If for example each division of this venture required ten percent above expenses that would mean a thirty percent markup before the saloon tacked on their profit. By necessity, scarcity must drive demand to support the higher cost. Moonshiners and smugglers will achieve absolute advantage in the liquor marketplace when the Eighteenth Amendment goes into effect. The prospect of this outcome has occupied my mind occasionally since the enactment of wartime restrictions. If Florence was correct in her suspicions, the system was in place in 1912 or earlier; but before wartime restrictions, the market for illegal distilled spirits was modest.

Deputy Wilkes considered the current moonshine trade a holdover from Sheriff Browning's corrupt administration, an annoyance which through proper policing and integrity in local government was constrainable. I disagree.

Corruption exists alongside opportunity: where one can make a profit there are some in office who are willing to betray the public trust to share in it. Political parties exist to promote the prosperity of one group of constituents or another. Lawbreakers occasionally find comfortable niches on the edges of this arrangement providing they do not become an irritation to the benefactors of the party. The end to the legal manufacturing and sale of alcoholic drink

presents opportunities to smugglers and bootleggers to the degree where they can move from their niches to the center. I can easily imagine otherwise law-abiding citizens participating in this new economy on some level, whether consuming or vending (or officeholding).

The deputies limited experience with the bootleg liquor market comes from drunks picked up on weekends and the arrested proprietors of the “shady saloons.” To date, most of the distilled spirits they confiscated came from secret stockpiles of legitimate liquor manufactured sometimes in the past; only a small portion was moonshine. I can anticipate that those involved in the trade of the latter are preparing for the day when their product will dominate the market.

As we continued upriver towards the “Narrows” the motor of our small boat labored to overcome the current. Obviously, this section promised a harrowing ordeal for anybody foolish enough to negotiate the flow in a rowboat from the opposite direction. If Florence’s abductors put her in the boat at Sics Landing, they didn’t take her downriver. We agreed to continue our excursion beyond this place because Chester examined it several times since the abduction of Clayton and Groves. Two miles further upriver we came to the abandoned Hall Boatyard. The wharves stretch into a deep-water lagoon scoured into the bluff by the current. The topography of the shore rises gradually about twelve feet to the cluster of brick workshops. Unfinished vessels of assorted sizes and piles of sundry debris clutter the intervening yard. Downriver of the wharves is the drydock cut in the bluff. Accessed by a winding pathway ascending it, the brick pumphouse for draining the drydock is the only visible structure above from the riverside. The gates are open, so the river flooded the enclosure. Only about a dozen feet of the stone block walls rise above the waterline. The path to the pumphouse caught my attention. This could be the same Florence described in her statement. Thus far, nothing on our journey approximated it. We

could not go ashore to make a closer examination because the attorney for the Hall Shipyard stipulated in the agreement that an employee of that company must be present to guide us. Even so, from our boat, I took many photographs with my box camera of these interesting features. It was the first time I had seen this site other than on a map.

Mr. Hennessy and Sheriff Smallwood decided to follow through with my plan to lure the turncoats and kidnappers out into the open. Just as I proposed, Mr. Skinner will use the opportunity to take Number 435 out for a run. It takes a while to get it ready so the ‘ears afoot’ have ample time to report the unusual activity to their chief. Ella is the decoy. Not only is she a close match for five-foot-eight blue eyed Emma, but she is also well-schooled in the skills necessary to thwart kidnappers.

Impressive deception

Liz returned yesterday afternoon. After speaking with her, we decided to tell Mr. Hennessy what she discovered on her “holiday.” Again, he threw us for a loop!

“Good afternoon, ladies. Please take a seat. I received a communication from Mr. Creswell which is most disconcerting.” He produced an old newspaper clipping from an envelope. Above the article was a studio portrait of a man who we didn’t know. “This is Walter Pierce. Remember him? He was the attorney who delivered the bonds to Miss Deschamps. In this article dated February 21, 1899, his title is company attorney for Howard Cowan & Son Cotton.” Liz interjected.

“Yes, I have it here. In 1901, Michael D. Shaw quit Cowan & Son Cotton to form a partnership with Arthur Mallet and Hiram Grady in Charleston. Pierce resigned his position with

Howard Cowan & Son to join Mallet & Grady Cotton Brokers. By 1904, he was the only remaining member of the original partnership working in Charleston. Their business address was a house rented to Arthur Mallet, and the local merchants recognize Walter Pierce who went by that name and his arrogant hot-tempered partner Grady, but none remember Shaw, including the neighbors. However, Shaw's name appeared on the legal documents establishing the partnership. Their brokerage did not do any business. Instead, they spent their days pestering merchants, haunting the wharves, and looking at vacant commercial buildings under the pretext of being potential renters. In 1904, Howard T. Cowan, president of Cowan & Son Cotton died; Mallet & Grady was a brokerage financed by him. It never accomplished anything because he died. Alfred Cowan took his place and Pierce changed the corporate name to 'The Charleston Office of Cowan Cotton & Fabric,' formerly Mallet & Grady."

"Have you been carrying on an investigation on your own?"

"Yes and no; I call it research. Some of it we know: Michael Dennis Shaw is the younger Michael Shaw who worked for Howard Cowan & Son Cotton, Rhodes Cotton Gin & Seed Oil, and Consolidated Cotton. Though his name appears on the official documents incorporating Mallet & Grady, I found no evidence suggesting he was an active partner in the business. Michael William Shaw, Sr. worked for Consolidated Cotton his entire career. Arthur Mallet worked continuously for Howard Cowan & Son, and later, Cowan Cotton & Fabric, never working for Rhodes Cotton Gin & Seed Oil or Consolidated Cotton."

"How did you discover all this?" Ha-ha-ha! Liz and her daddy couldn't leave it alone! Those two when on a little holiday. Covering three states, they pestered public officials, newspaper editors, corporate managers, and relatives of the deceased Michael Shaw, eventually assembling a nice pile of public documents and statements. No fair: they didn't take me along! Did they find

anything current about the younger Shaw? No. He left the employment of Consolidated Cotton in 1916. That's it! What about Grady? Nothing! "Very well, here is more from Mr. Creswell: after 1904, Walter Pierce still managed the offices of Cowan Cotton & Fabric in Charleston, but it was merely a rented residence that he vacated in the fall of 1916; Alfred Cowan claims the bonds we recovered belong to him but he must provide proof beyond his father's calling card glued inside the lid of the chest; Michael D. Shaw rents an office in Wayne City near the Consolidated Cotton mill though the building manager said he hasn't used it since last fall; the deceased "special constables," or "pirates," as the *Messenger* calls them, were professional criminals, once members of the now disbanded Campbell Gang; and Hiram Grady was never employed by Howard Cowan & Son, even though his photograph appears in their booklet. Mr. Creswell found Grady's role in Howard Cowan's game baffling. Why choose a man like that to do anything, much less a business partner, save the capital he brought to the venture. He had that. Doled out quarterly in generous portions by an attorney. So, Mr. Yates intelligence was accurate on that point. Messy-messy-messy, ladies! Myrna, tell me why we should be concerned?"

"Whether Mallet & Grady was a façade for Howard Cowan's dubious financial dealings or not is irrelevant to the case that Mr. Buchanan wants to bring against Arthur Mallet and associates. This might also include Alfred Cowan, Gilbert Lawson, and others if there is irrefutable evidence connecting them to the conspiracy to compel the company into investigating the disappearance of Arthur Mallet while traveling on its railroad. That's the whole of it. Though the proximate consequences of their deceptions including, but not limited to, the multiple attempts to abduct Miss Waddell, the damage to company property caused by the explosion of the steam tug, and the endangerment of our employees, involves different parties, counting Hiram Grady, who did not participate in the Arthur Mallet disappearance ruse. Nevertheless, the

proximate consequences, whether by design or unintended, offer the possibility of a successful civil case brought against the Mallet conspirators. How does that sound? I turn twenty-four in September so that means Mr. Buchanan no longer speaks on my behalf at the stockholders' meetings. I'm practicing the art of dispassionate rhetoric so the directors might peg me as pragmatic and analytical but nice." Mr. Hennessy rolled his eyes. "Our concern about the possibility that Mr. Mallet used our company to facilitate his deception has merit, but we must await further findings from Mr. Creswell's investigation."

"What about you, Miss Buchanan?"

"I am inclined to agree with Myrna. Even so, nobody has yet to uncover evidence that Mr. Mallet had cause to deliberately "get lost" other than self-preservation. That is a plausible defense regardless of his previous wrongdoings. Aside, the business practices of Cowan Cotton & Fabric appear risky and unethical."

Concerning Cowan Cotton & Fabric, the father and daughter sleuths discovered a disconcerting method for the company's rapid growth. Howard Cowan owned a cotton brokerage: they bought ginned cotton from a number of warehouses and sold it to textile manufacturers. After his death, his son Alfred acquired ginning operations and warehouses to expand business. Eventually, the company bought several small regional mills to make fabric. The company carried heavy bond debt to finance its growth. To service its obligations and acquire new holdings, some of these older plants did not receive necessary improvements despite the demand for increased production. Once run into the ground, Cowan pillaged the useful equipment, auctioned the rest, and sold the real estate, leaving the workers to find other employment. That is what happened to the cotton works at Port Unity.

The boatyard

Sunday, Deputy Wilkes, and Major Durant showed up unannounced after breakfast. Accompanying them was Mr. Evenson from the Hall Shipyard. Sheriff Smallwood pressed Lavinia to allow us to search the boatyard after Deputy Wilkes went out to Northeast Township on Saturday. On showing his magazine picture of a Hudson *Model 33 Torpedo* to the men gathered at the general store near Haynes Town, several told him that hunters (most of them hunt) frequently saw one like it parked on the boatyard grounds. After fetching my bag and riding hat, I joined them.

Turning onto the untended drive leading to the boatyard, now barely visible threw a dense blind of young pines, we stopped to examine the roadway. Since it rained often starting in April, we expected to find deep tire tracks. We did, for several vehicles. The road also had some impressive mudholes! Out of an abundance of caution, Deputy Wilkes went around them. Once parked in the yard behind the open gate, we began our search with the office. Secured by a padlock, we did not expect to find anything. Instead, we discovered two new kerosene lanterns atop a battered desk. Deputy Wilkes turned to Mr. Evenson.

“Has anybody been out here lately?”

“No, sir. The last employee who signed for the keys was Mr. Parnell. That was in 1917.” Deputy Wilkes put on his driving gloves to examine one of the lanterns. After unscrewing the cap and taking a whiff, he turned back to the locksmith.

“Kerosene goes bad after sitting around for more than a year. You can tell by the smell; and look, the whole surface of the desk is dusty, even under the bottom of the lanterns.”

“Sir, they’re not our lanterns. So, how did they get here. Door padlocked, our men nailed shut all the windows, no holes in the floor: that means somebody used a key. Look down there:

shoe prints in the dust leading from the door and we left these chairs stacked in the storeroom out back.” After conducting a thorough search of the office, we found nothing that Mr. Evenson deemed unusual, so Deputy Wilkes took the lanterns back to his automobile and prepared a receipt for them. Our examination of the six padlocked brick buildings constituting the workshops was a tedious affair. On closing down the boatyard, Elias Hall had all the machinery removed to the shipyard save a small stationary engine used to power a winch for launching small vessels. The central workshop was massive, well over twenty feet in height not counting its lantern roof. Its bricked-up windows made it seem cavernous. Except for a long oak workbench, the interior was bare. An engine house abutting the workshop powered the machinery. We found sundry mechanical parts strewn willy-nilly on the floor. The doors on both buildings were ironclad. I could continue with a description of the other buildings, but they had no clues to offer: no shoe prints, no signs of recent entry. We went down to the docks. There we found numerous wooden boats in various stages of construction in the yard. Chief among them was a flatboat buttressed by a cradle of timbers. Workers abandoned it in the last stages of construction. Beyond here, the elevation slopes downward to the elaborate wharves.

The central wharf showed evidence of recent use, particularly fresh abrasions, and gouges in the pilings where vessels tied off. The visitors littered the deck with empty produce crates, whiskey bottles, and tin cans. Deputy Wilkes remarked that it was common knowledge that commercial boats belonging to some operators such as the Northeast River Navigation Company tie-off here before continuing to Port Unity. The wharf at Haynes Town charges a fee for docking overnight.

Downriver of the wharves, the winding footpath starts at the water’s edge. I was excited! Upon reaching the top of the bluff we found the pumphouse for the drydock. Once unlocked, it

proved to be bare of machinery but the stumps of large pipes coming up through the floor had connecting flanges! Continuing on the footpath we came to the drydock. It was quite impressive. Mr. Evenson explained what we were seeing.

“In the days when the large river boats made regular trips, the company repaired them here. The depth of the water at this spot is sixteen feet. We are about that height from the waterline, so it was quite a drop when pumped dry. That’s why Captain Hall had this wrought iron fence put around it. There used to be iron staircases going down both sides at the rear and a crane for bringing down what the workers needed. The ramp rising up through the arch in the back wall ended at an elevator platform which descended to the bottom. One stationary engine turned the wheel for both hoisting the ramp’s cart and turning the shaft running out to the gearbox of the elevator. The company sold all of it for scrap including all the pipes. See those flanges sticking out of the wall every ten feet above the highwater line? An elbow and twenty feet of iron pipe going down to the drains below the bottom attached to them. Let me show you something.”

On the upriver side of the drydock was a flight of stone steps leading down to an ironclad door. It didn’t have a padlock. Instead, an old mortice lock which opens with a large brass key secured it. Immediately, I retrieved the pistol from my bag.

“Hold on, gentlemen. This is where the ‘special constables’ held Florence Phelps. There’s no telling what’s behind that door. Deputy Wilkes and Major Durant unholstered their sidearms. “We can’t all go in. Somebody needs to stand guard.” The Major took the position at the top of the steps and Deputy Wilkes went in first after the locksmith opened the door. “What do you see?”

“Nothing!”

“Is it empty?”

“I can’t see anything! We need a light. Damnation! Just ran into one of those things poking out of the wall.” He carefully felt his way back into the light at the entrance. “Alright, none of us has a light. Ironically, we found two kerosene lanterns but they’re evidence.” I removed the fancy cigar lighter Frank gave me from my bag. “What’s that?” I struck it. “Fine, let’s take a peek before that thing burns up. If it goes, we’ll crawl out.” We went in about thirty feet and that was enough. I was right! The passageway was six feet wide by eight feet tall with an arched ceiling and a floor of stone slabs into which the mason carved a channel for draining off water. The second flanged pipe had a length of sturdy chain padlocked to it with another padlock on the end, both old style three-tumbler types in cast bronze cases. The chain left stretched out on the floor was about eight feet long. We returned outside quickly after my flame started to flicker. Once Mr. Evenson secured the door, we returned to Deputy Wilkes’ automobile, and then proceeded to Haynes Town Station to telephoned Sheriff Smallwood and Mr. Hennessy. After seven years of dismissing Florence’s statement as a narcotic-tainted misapprehension, we found the probable place where the “special constables” held Florence. Though we had yet to discover evidence connecting the site to others they abducted, the lantern bore signs of recent use that approximated the reported recent occasions when hunters saw the Hudson. If so, the problem of an unaccounted-for set of keys did not end with the ice factory. There is another explanation: the perpetrators wiped clean the kerosene lanterns, padlocks, and so forth. Indeed, the “special constables” were professionals. In that case, it is not farfetched to imagine that one of their number is skilled in opening locks without a key. I can. What doesn’t fit with this hypothesis is the padlocks on the chain that tethered Florence. They are the same make as those used to secure the buildings in 1909 yet none of the latter are missing.

Sheriff Smallwood and several deputies returned to the pipe passageway with lights and made a thorough search. In a section of the drainage channel cut into the stone floor they found a dainty antique gold necklace. It belongs to Florence! She was happy to get it back since her mother gave it to her on her twelfth birthday. So, the captors rowed upstream from Sics Landing to the boatyard, they took her by the foot path to the drydock, and then locked her in the passageway.

Clarence and Ruppert

Saturday afternoon, I planned to take a stroll to get out from underfoot. Uh-huh, Mrs. Keane was running me out! Phillip is working at the station, so paying him a surprise visit was in order. Just as I was ready to slip out the back door, she came up behind me.

“Myrna! There are two nice gentlemen here to see you. Here are their calling cards. They’re your size and have a beautiful automobile!” She thinks that if I get sweet on a fellow shorter than me, I might unintentionally damage him.

“Splendid! Tell them I’ll be out in a moment. I can’t wait to see their Peerless!” So, they decided to visit me. That’s fine.”

“Mr. Yates and Mr. Kline, what a wonderful surprise! I’ve heard so much about you. I’m Myrna Levesque.” They tipped their hats. “May I have a peek at your engine?” Clarence smiled.

“I take it that you are fond of automobiles?”

“Anything mechanical is for me.” He opened the hood. “Oh-my!”

“*Model 60-Six* seven-passenger touring, 1914, six cylinders, two valves per cylinder, sliding gear transmission, and it has a gorgeous clock: it drives sweet!”

“1914? I thought you were driving around in the railroad district in 1912?”

“We were! That was Ruppert’s 1909 *Model 25*. Keep current with the latest motors and you’ll never fall behind. Moreover, your roads are a bit rough, and we always need more horsepower. Want to take a ride?”

“I sure do! Are you taking me to your hideout?”

“We’re encamped at Florence’s place.”

“Oh, that’s no fun! I was expecting something more mysterious. No, I wasn’t – ha-ha-ha! Let’s go!” What a ride! Ruppert tore along on County Highway full throttle after we left the Northside but pulled back on the approach to Haynes Town.

“So. Mr. Yates, why did you pick me as your liaison?”

“Lavinia said you are Emma’s friend, and Sam gave us all these newspaper clippings. I mean, it some impressive stuff: saving a fellow officer from gunfire, digging out a worker buried under coal, running headlong in the dark towards an approaching freight train to place torpedoes on the tracks, outwitting a dangerous woman criminal who handcuffed you to something inside a locomotive, discovering an underground tomb, designing some kind of cylinder valves, and you bake cookies.”

“I sure do! Would you like to try one of my special butter cookies with black walnut pieces? The shell on those tasty nuts is so hard you must bust them with a hammer so all you get is pieces. They’re good in pancakes, too. Have the whole bag. I have plenty.”

“How’s the pooch?”

“I’m still waiting for him. Alrighty, gentlemen, pull under a nice shade tree and let’s get down to business. Just to let you know, Emma thought well of you two despite starting off on the wrong foot. I’m not a lady who makes it a habit of going for drives with handsome gentlemen who just happen by so let’s say we have a common purpose and mutual trust. Am I correct?”

“Yes, ma’am. We’re your guardian angels.”

“Uh-huh, it works both ways. Call me Myrna. Now, tell me what I need to know.”

“We went behind enemy lines. Hiram Grady hired Clyde Parnell to grab Mallet before he skipped off with their loot in December, but his man couldn’t get around Lawson. That was a Laine County moonshiner named Philo ‘Smoky’ Grimes, the dirty jobs man for the Grimes Clan. Great name there for a heavy: Smoky. He trailed Mallet home to Cowan. Something was not right there, so he stayed in town through Christmas. Mallet left for Port Unity after New Years; Grimes followed. Lawson was still there so he stayed back. After sending a telegram, Arthur paid a visit to Lavinia with Lawson following, and then headed back to the station. Our girl came out, so Grimes followed her to Jane’s place. After reporting back to Parnell, they decided to take Jane. She might know what Mallet was pulling. ‘Old Man’ Willard Grimes said forget it. Kidnapping Sheriff Smallwood’s niece was too risky, especially since Grady couldn’t prove she knew anything. Parnell thought kidnapping Jane’s boy was better. She’d pay anything to get him back. Smoky told him to stick with the liquor business. After ‘Old Man’ Willard told Grady to take his business elsewhere, his majesty bribed a fellow on Lavinia’s household staff to spy for him. That’s when he learned that she was keeping a “treasure chest” for Arthur. About this time, Annie Cowan brought her letters to the newspaper. Thinking Lavinia would sell out Arthur to save Emma, Grady hired a drifter looking for work who spent time in prison for armed robbery.”

“We know how that went. How did Grady get the box?”

“He had his spy take it. Why didn’t the idiot think of that earlier? Arthur cleaned it out. Grady went back to Parnell. Figuring Jane and Emma knew where Arthur was hiding, hothead wanted both to ‘receive a visit.’ Grady was on the outs with the Grimes Clan, so Parnell said he’d pass it along to his Port Unity partners. They were more interested in Emma, and so were the

proprietors of the Northside moonshine establishments. She was Sheriff Smallwood's top snoop, the lady with the golden ears. If she warned Arthur about Grady coming to town, what else did she know? Well, nothing. They wanted professionals to take our girl. You know how that turned out, too. What you don't know is Parnell sent the tug downriver with a load of moonshine for Old Haynes Plantation Landing. His Port Unity boss also wanted it at Whitaker's dock waiting to take the 'special constables' and Emma to their getaway car at Unity Bluff Landing later in the day. Fine and dandy, except Parnell's pal Arless decided to take the shipment and unloaded at Haugh Landing, selling cut-rate to outsiders. He had no idea that their bosses provided the services of the 'special constables.' After pillaging the load, Arless' crew took it to the North Docks and abandoned it at Whitaker's dock, oblivious of the plot they spoiled."

"Who blew it up?"

"Nobody is talking about that. We suspect the competition, Lester Whitaker. Smoky sent some of his men out to finish with Emma but Chester did an outstanding job of fixing that problem. Well, we did our part behind the scenes and Cato's fellows were a tremendous help. Smoky is out; Parnell is out, and Arless is in jail. Who knows what happened to Grady, but I wager that he isn't coming back. The big city bosses are upset about losing their men so 'Old Man' Willard stepped down and let organize crime manage his business. Right now, they are more concerned about satisfying the demand in the big city markets. Port Unity since the end of the war is small time. Boss Griggs was the victim of a coupe within his own house. Going back away, it was Griggs who first hired those 'special constables' to make his problems disappear. That's when they were at their best. A real hardnose named Wentworth was their boss. He went bye-bye and new management let things slide. Now, local bosses hire local. Joe's boys didn't let go of the shop. I don't know about his successor, but he has Parnell's share wrapped up. They're

out of politics and fully in with the liquor trade. Big trouble! The Laine County boys fall in with what they know. However, the new Griggs Gang is just getting on their feet.”

“So, Arthur Mallet’s legendary treasure doesn’t figure into it. Booze is everything.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t say that. Somebody big on the outside wants Mallet’s goods and is willing to pay top dollar to any outfit who delivers. The Grimes Clan is still willing to lose a few more of their boys trying. They’ve been making overtures to the Northside ‘businessmen’ for some help. Those jokers need some help in return. New management all-around wants three troublemakers out of the way: Sheriff Smallwood, Cato Houghton, and you.”

“Me?”

“Yes, but they’ll hold you for ransom first. Don’t worry, we’ll protect you.”

“I’m sure. When should I expect a visit?”

“Be on the lookout for a baggy-pants character in a red shirt. It’s really a girl. She’ll lead them to you.”

“Yes, I know.”

“You’re good!”

“Do you know a two-faced informant in this new enterprise?”

“A few. Boss Griggs’ payroll gave us lots of names, some willing to work both sides if it pays.”

“Tell them that Sheriff Smallwood and I discovered Arthur Mallet’s secret cache of British bearer bonds, and we will be transporting them by special train to an undisclosed point on the line. There, government agents will assume custody of the bonds. The total par value of the bonds is one and a half million pounds sterling.” Ha-ha-ha!

“So, what are they really worth?”

“I have no idea.”

“Don’t leave us out. This road is perfect for setting up an ambush so let us pace you full speed and cover your flank. With our still busters, we can fend off the best of them.”

“What’s a still buster?”

“It’s a rifle with a barrel as long as a goose gun and the diameter of a quarter. It shoots a slug that punches through metal, turning an automobile engine into junk easily!”

“In that case, you must offer your services to Charles Creswell, He’s the gentleman representing the government’s interest in this matter. No doubt, he’ll want to hire you. I’ll leave a message with Lavinia when he arrives.”

We had a pleasant drive back to town. Mrs. Keane approved of my new gentlemen friends. “They’re such nice boys.” Good enough! I wasn’t manhandled, tied up, or threatened with ending up buried alive.

There remains so many loose ends concerning Mallet’s devious dealings that it is difficult to determine where to begin. It can wait. Presently, we must warn Cato and Sheriff Bert of the threat and then prepare for the assault. Mr. Hennessy, the military scholar, proved himself a valiant warrior in the defense of Charles Creswell’s special train. It seems the appropriate time for the latter to return the favor. Besides that, I have to excellent potential recruits for his organization.

The Trap

Neither Sheriff Smallwood nor Mr. Hennessy were pleased that I took it upon myself to make plans for them. I defended my position by noting that signing myself into protective custody for a month and then skulking off to parts unknown would not be to their advantage.

Besides that, the sheriff and Cato Houghton were also in peril. Mr. Hennessy decided to go ahead with my ruse and Sheriff Smallwood reluctantly agreed. Ella insisted upon remaining a part of it, so Mr. Hennessy allowed her to join Chester's "shoot-em-up" riflemen – Goodness!

A yard engine shunted the baggage and first-class cars to the turnout at Unity Bluff Station at half-past ten. Mr. Deschamps gave us an open road to Northeast Depot if we left at eleven. Number 435 had a head of steam and was waiting on a turnout above the upper yards. Mr. Cooke and Mr. McKee volunteered to make the run despite the dangers and Captain Johnston rode along in the cab because of it. Sheriff Smallwood's deputies took their positions in the woods along the dirt road leading from River Road to Unity Bluff and Chester's men took positions on the heights above the cut of the great arc. Sheriff Smallwood, Major Durant, and I were in the passenger car; preferring to repeat his defensive strategy from our previous engagement, Mr. Creswell had Clarence and Ruppert armed with their "still-busters" joining the government riflemen in the baggage car. Phillip was in command of the station patrol under orders to detain any baggy-pants adolescent wearing a red shirt. At a quarter of eleven, Mr. Cooke backed Number 435 through the arc for the coupling. Mr. Creswell's riflemen conspicuously assumed their positions around the train. Thereafter, Deputy Phales arrived with an armed escort. He placed the lockbox inside the baggage car, and Mr. Hennessy padlocked it. The end doors of the car locked from the inside so Clarence, Ruppert, and the riflemen could step out on the platforms to join in the defense. Assisting us in the passenger car was Major Durant, Sergeant Bates, and guess. That's right, ladies, the magnificent Charles M. Creswell was riding along to ensure safe transfer of the bonds. Yes, and more of his government men were at Northeast Depot ready to receive the lockbox. Nobody was happier than Sheriff Smallwood to hand off those bonds. At

eleven o'clock, the semaphore gave us proceed-clear. A quarter mile into the arc we encountered a sedan parked across the tracks. Several armed men out front set fire to fuel oil on the crossties in an attempt to signal us to stop. After we failed to slow, their friends behind the automobile commenced firing at the locomotive with rifles. Mr. Cooke gave her steam and rammed through, sending the wreckage flying. After we passed, Chester's men fired a volley. That was it! What's next?

Coming out of the arc we entered the double track corridor at forty-six miles per hour. The next spot they could hit us was where County Highway ran alongside the tracks, so Mr. Cooke increased our speed. All clear! Where were they? We heard rifle shots and then a black sedan careened onto County Highway from Haugh Landing full speed, its occupants spraying gunfire at our car. We gave them a volley when they came alongside. Our pursuers followed behind on the roadway. Suddenly, they raced ahead toward the locomotive, so we aimed at their tires as they passed. Ka-boom, ka-boom: the automobile disintegrated in fiery scrap before our eyes. Surprise! Clarence and Ruppert hit the mark with their still-busters. During our exchange with those rascals, a bullet grazed my upper arm. I was mad!

We crossed the trestle at Buzzard Creek and then tore through Haynes Town Station like a hurricane. Alrighty, now the curve to the bridge. We couldn't take it that fast. Their last chance was stopping us on the approach to the bridge. There they were! Having pulled up a rail, the rascals took cover behind their automobile. Ha-ha-ha! They sabotaged the wrong track! As we sped by all of us from Captain Johnston to Mr. Hennessy peppered their sedan with bullets. Two miles to Northeast Depot! Hurrah! We came to a stop eighteen minutes before the southbound trains. The rifle-toting government men were waiting on the platform. Charles Creswell signed the papers for the transfer, and then retired to his well-guarded private car spotted on a turnout to

await the continuation of his journey with the Number 435. That would not happen until after midnight when the overnight express passed. Major Durant, Captain Johnston, and Sergeant Bates were continuing on to Orchard with Mr. Creswell. In the meanwhile, Mr. Cooke and Mr. Hennessy informed the stationmaster of the damaged rail, so he ordered out a crew to close off that section of track for the repairs after Deputy Phales, Major Durant, and several men with stretchers cross the bridge on foot to assess our handywork: one dead, three seriously wounded. Traffic proceeded on the other track from Northeast to Haynes Town until two o'clock. The time had come the slip into the lavatory to tend to my arm. The stationmaster gave me a bottle of carbolic acid to disinfect my "cut" and several gauze bandage rolls. Drats!

Mr. Hennessy took me back to Port Unity along with Deputy Phales, Clarence, and Rupert in the caboose of a local freight train. Our bullet riddled cars remained at Northeast Depot to undergo inspection. We did not arrive at Unity Terminal until four o'clock. Along the way, I was dumbstruck by the horrific carnage we wrought in the minutes we ran the gauntlet: eight dead, six survivors. All of it originated in my head. The upper yards patrol captured the red-shirted betrayer. Her name was Rose Saunders, longtime boarder at Mrs. Holbrook's, who like Florence, worked as an office girl in the accounting department of Whitaker & Blackwell. Deputy Phales registered her in the courthouse jail and then immediately sent her to the cells for special prisoners at the county farm out of concern for her safety. Myrtle Pruitt played her role as loose tongue in this massacre so well that Mr. Hennessy recommended her for a commendation.

After returning to the terminal, my "guardian angels" said they look forward to inviting me along on their next drive in the country and then they set off in their Peerless to avoid the hubbub. I went to the station infirmary to get my wound properly dressed, so Phillip took me home late. Mrs. Keane was not pleased.

“Myrna, where’s your granddaddy?”

“Speaking with the newspaper reporter.”

“Your messy! What did you do to your jacket?”

“It’s nothing. The doctor at the infirmary patched me up.”

“Roughhousing again! Go clean up and put on your dinner dress before your granddaddy comes home. Is Mr. Quince staying for dinner?”

“Yes.”

“Hurry up then. Don’t keep him waiting. Fix that hair!” She pointed her finger at Phillip. “You, wait in the parlor! Stay out from underfoot until you hear the dinner bell, tinkle-tinkle-tinkle. Shoo!” Granddaddy James and Ella came home at about the same time. Both visited the infirmary upon learning about my injury. The doctor told them it wasn’t a cut. “A bullet grazed her arm. It is not deep, extends for about an inch, and should heal quickly.” He expected the scar would fade in time. Who cares? I have more to worry about than a scar on my arm. Will they, whoever they are, try again? Mr. Hennessy thinks not. Losing three automobiles and eight men for nothing is failure. “What idiot thought up such a foolish plot?” Not so, only ill-timed, and the rascals had no expectations of encountering an overwhelming defense. It’s my guess that the bosses are now more concerned about Miss Saunders and the survivors than Sheriff Smallwood, Cato Houghton, and me. If their true objective was stealing the bonds, we amply proved their ineptitude. Even so, the outcome came down to choosing the wrong track to sabotage. Had they known Mr. Deschamps put us on the express track because we were passing through Haynes Town Station, we would have no choice but stop. What then? Throwing the engine in reverse comes first to my mind. Parking their automobile near the tracks gave away their position leaving us time to back away starting from a safe distance. The more I thought about their

scheme the futility of its underpinning became apparent. To stop the Number 435 without bringing about a spectacular catastrophe one of the villains must stowaway on it. The Austrian spy Aloisa stealthily seized control of Mr. Creswell's special train without firing a shot. Clarence and Ruppert could but it isn't in their nature. I knew it straight off: they are knights-errant.

Now I have a battle scar and a badge of treachery: that's the price for staying alive. I never come home empty-handed. Phillip told me the true object of war is preventing somebody from killing you. The obvious means of doing so are depriving the enemy of the materials to wage war, reduce the number of soldiers in the enemy's ranks, or inflict terrible damage upon the state that supports the conflict.

Cato thanked Mr. Hennessy and Sheriff Smallwood for their warning. He sent Ella and I bouquets and silver knobbed ladies' walking sticks. Like Florence, he is arming the men who work for him. The *Messenger* published an account of our adventure with the sensational byline "Wheels of Death." Fortunately, Mr. Hennessy respectfully downplayed my role in the slaughter. There is something grotesquely unsporting about fourteen men in dinky automobiles going up against 150 tons of locomotive, not to mention two dapper gentlemen whose preferred defensive strategy is blowing up the threat.

It's now September. My birthday is next Friday. I'll be twenty-four years old. The last five years forced me to grow up faster than I expected but the silly rough-and-tumble tomboy hasn't lost her delight in play. That said, it is time to resume my narrative of the enquiry into the attempts to abduct Emma Waddell that turned into the Arthur Mallet investigation that evolved into local war.

Consequences

Overnight, Mr. Creswell and his government colleagues commenced their own investigation into the assault upon our special train. That its purpose was fulfilling an arrangement to transfer the bonds into the custody of federal agents was sufficient cause. Also, it was an armed attempt to rob a train. Miss Saunders confessed to being employed by Joe Griggs to serve as guide for the “special constables” up through 1912 and then offered her services to “outsider businessman” Ted Dillard, the wartime king of vice and up and coming overlord of the local bootleg liquor trade. Arless and Parnell were his underlings so after their blunder he skipped off before the big city bosses made him pay. Her final employer was Philo “Smoky” Grimes, the benighted strategist behind the “Battle for Number 435.” He perished in the great arc, a victim of the “Shoot-em-up” Wilkes Rifle Company. Miss Saunders and Mr. Arless are awaiting trial. The men who survived the battle confessed and agreed to testify against the surviving members of the Grimes Clan involved in a plethora of crimes. So, where does the leadership of the “New Griggs Gang” fit in? They were not involved in any of it. Arthur Mallet’s scheme to bait Hiram Grady into destroying himself cleared away their rivals. Regardless, our obvious adversaries have yet to win one battle, their bosses, on the run or deceased. For now, our investigation is at a standstill, so Mr. Hennessy assigned Liz and I to other duties.

Once again, in our efforts to solve one mystery we are left with a tangle of loose ends. Where is Arthur Mallet, Walter Pierce, and Michael Shaw? Why did Howard Cowan established Mallet & Grady? What happened to Hiram Grady, Clyde Parnell, Nat Moore, Zack Colton, Billy Fields, Gil McEvers, and the men kidnapped by the ‘special constables?’ Who killed Judge Phelps, Fred Wheeler, Joe Griggs, and probably Pete Bresnahan?

Yesterday, Tom Phales dropped by the office for a visit. I asked him whether it was possible to search the Haynes Plantation Graveyard for the bullet that passed through the skull of the unidentified man Mr. Culver's crew exhumed. He asked why.

"If the bullet happens to have been shot from a certain antique military revolver you're holding as evidence, there's a possibility its owner was the killer."

"Any ideas on how we go about that?"

"That is a large area. First, we figure out where *not* to look."